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ABSTRACT

This report presents results of a survey of 354 Economic and Medical Field Services (EMFS) division social workers in Washington State. The survey investigated their needs for graduate level academic credit from professional training provided by Western Washington University (WWU), as well as matters of credit utility and institutional and academic program choice. A strong majority of social workers indicated a preference for graduate credit for WWU training along with a mitigating concern over cost of credit as well as a desire to save obtainable graduate credits or use them to complete an unfinished program. Also, a majority of social workers desired a social work career with the Department of Social and Health Services and wished to undertake or complete a professionally associated graduate program. The age pattern of social workforce age, academic needs, and career intentions imply that a clear long-term group of benefits would accrue to the EMFS division if social workers' professional development needs are actively supported. These implied benefits include increased staff retention, job satisfaction, commitment and service delivery quality, and decreased error rates and new employee retraining and direct supervision costs. Implications and recommendations for EMFS staff development are provided. Appendices include the survey instrument and the narrative response catalog. Contains 16 references. (Author/GLR)

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Graduate Credit Needs Assessment for Western Washington University Contract Trainings in the Division of Economic and Medical Field Services

Developed by
Dale Zeretzke, Development Specialist
August 1992

Western Washington University
Program for Social Service Research, Demonstration and Training

Under contract with
Washington State Department of Social and Health Services
Division of Economic and Medical Field Services

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This is the final report of a study requested by
the Division of Economic and Medical Field Services (EMFS),
Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), Washington State,
concerning the Graduate Credit Needs of EMFS Social Workers
taking Western Washington University contract trainings.

This study was produced under contract with the
Program for Social Service Research, Demonstration and Training (PSSRDT)
at Western Washington University,
Bellingham, Washington

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for the proficiency and enduring interest

which made the collection of these data, and the production of this study, possible.

My thanks.

ABSTRACT

A telephone survey was conducted contacting 354 EMFS division social workers of record as of September 1991, and investigating their needs for graduate level academic credit from professional trainings provided by Western Washington University, as well as matters of credit utility, institutional and academic program choice.

The survey consisted of 36 questions of which 23 questions, focused by seven specific objectives, related to matters of graduate credit, and 13 questions identified demographic factors of the social workers and their caseloads. All telephone contacts were made to social workers at their offices by permission of their Regional Administrators.

Results are presented graphically, and discussed by both specific survey question and objectives. Very clear trends were visible identifying a strong majority of social workers indicating a preference for graduate credit for WWU training(s), a mitigating concern over cost of credit, a desire to "bank" obtainable graduate credits or use them to complete an unfinished program, a strong majority of social workers desiring a social work career with DSHS, and a strong majority of social workers who would like to undertake or complete a professionally associated graduate program.

The age pattern of social workforce age, academic needs and career intentions imply a clear long-term group of benefits to the EMFS division if social workers' professional development needs are actively supported. These implied benefits include increased staff retention, job satisfaction, commitment and service delivery quality, and decreased error rates and new employee retraining and direct supervision costs.

Implications and recommendations for EMFS staff development are provided.

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Western Washington University (WWU) is currently under contract with the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to produce 49 topical professional skills and development trainings and to deliver these statewide to the Divisions of Income Assistance (DIA), Economic and Medical Field Services (EMFS) and Children and Family Services (DCFS). Fourteen of these trainings are optionally available for WWU academic credit at the 400 level making them potentially useable as undergraduate and graduate program electives. Twenty-four of the trainings focus on professional skills involved in social work. The Institute for Social Welfare (*the Institute*) is presently the only credit option training available to EMFS social workers.[1]

EMFS has requested that the graduate level professional development needs of its social workers be examined with the goal of enhancing career development, stimulating improving staff retention, and increasing service quality and delivery proficiency.

The following needs assessment addresses the graduate credit needs of social workers in this division with respect to contract trainings provided by WWU. Results of the study are based on the telephone survey responses of all available EMFS social workers of record at the outset of the study (September 1991). The survey was founded on seven objectives that reflect elements of need for graduate credits for professional trainings provided by

---

[1] The 1989-91 biennium training contract supported all credit costs for EMFS trainees. Trainees in cycles 1-4 of the Institute were subject to that contract. The 1991-93 biennium contract supports 43% of credit costs with 57% remaining the obligation of the trainee. It is anticipated that this may effect training registration for university credit.

WWU. A set of demographic questions profiles the current EMFS social work staff, their educational background and client base.

A brief review of literature provides a context for examining career development needs of social workers, support of staff retention and service delivery quality assurance. Results are examined both regionally and statewide. Graphics expedite a comprehensive overview of results.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Overview of Professional Development History

The debate over the need for, and value of, graduate level social work preparation is inextricably woven in the fabric of social work in this country since Abraham Flexner's 1915 address to the National Conference on Social Work. Indeed, as early as 1910, public universities began providing elements of an undergraduate social work curriculum.

Throughout the century, however, the social work profession's continuous and current struggle to develop a respected sense of professionalism has often become mired in the discussion over graduate status as its essential credential. By the early 1930s, proponents of graduate level preparation were gaining solid ground in a full-scale "practice versus theory" debate.

At that time the American Association for Social Work (AASW) was the reigning professional body concerned with preparation standards. In 1937 it took a position requiring all professional social work education to be at the graduate level by 1940. This, of course, was an aggressively scheduled and hotly contested decree given the scale of social woes that unravelled in the post-Depression era. The 1930s were pivotal for this culture's definition of social welfare and its practice. After Roosevelt's "New Deal," political and economic periods would further carve American social welfare philosophy including the post-World War II era, Johnson's "Great Society" and Reagan's "Reaganomics."

Throughout these expansions and contractions in social welfare delivery the debate over professional preparation continued. The reaction to the AASW's 'graduate-only' decree came in 1942 through the formation of the National Association of Schools of Social

Administration (NASSA) largely led by faculty members of land-grant and publicly supported colleges. Their initial membership represented 34 institutions and, while not opposed to graduate education, they quickly began to develop curricula and support the cause of undergraduate education as professional level preparation. The position differences between these two professional factions was corrosive to the fundamental solidarity in the social work profession and seriously hindered the progress of the professional development agenda from the latter 1940s into the 1950s.

In 1946 the National Council of Social Work Education (NCSWE) was formed in an effort to develop cooperation and collaboration in the development of an agenda on professional preparation, status and standards. The AASW, NASSA and NCSWE all maintained their existence and formal views for a period, however, further subdividing and impeding professional consensus until 1951 when the comprehensive Hollis-Taylor study entitled *Social Work Education in the United States* broke the mold. According to Lowe (1985, p.59),

> the [Hollis-Taylor] report strongly implied that there was a place for professional social work degree programs at the undergraduate level, and that these programs were not to be viewed as threats to graduate degrees. . . . Hollis and Taylor also stated that undergraduate programs must have a strong liberal arts base and that the major itself should not be overly technical or vocational.

The fundamental outcome of this pivotal report was the formation in 1952 of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) solely replacing all of the three previous organizations which were attempting to guide social work education in this country. CSWE remains in that academic monitoring and accrediting position to the present day and the

climate of professional preparation is now generally collaborative. Indeed, Gibelman (1983, p.25) cites a

> study supported by the Department of Health and Human Services on training in the human services [which] noted that social work education and public agency practice have shared a common set of assumptions:
>
> - That there is a need for professional workers in the public social services.
> - That there is a main profession (social work or business/public administration) in the public social services, but other disciplines can be utilized.
> - That professional credentials (MSW or MBA/BPA) are important for insuring quality.
> - That professional training cannot be done "on the job" but rather has to be done in advance in an institution of higher education, either as preparation for employment or as full-time educational leave.
> - That professional training has more value than short-term "technical training," because it enables adaptation to changing circumstances and therefore is not rigid, nor does it become obsolete so easily.

While the 1962 and 1967 amendments to the Social Security Act released significant funding intended to upgrade social service delivery and "professionalize" social service staff, the result was not clear-cut in terms of either client-centered outcomes or staff development (Gibelman, 1983). In spite of that staff development thrust, caseloads spiralled and graduate level workers became disillusioned and left public welfare agencies. It can be argued that public welfare agencies were not able to develop and maintain a "critical mass" of professional level social work staff to effect reduction of caseloads or services in that economic period.

Professionalism, Job Satisfaction and Staff Retention

Opening a recent article on recruitment and retention of social work staff, Ewalt (19[illegible], p.214) says that

> the single most important characteristic of a human services agency is the quality of its personnel. . . . Human services agencies, therefore, are highly dependent on the availability of qualified employees. . . . Equally important is retention of workers in specific agencies and the profession as a whole.

In this culture professionalism is commonly associated with quality or technical expertise of services. Gibelman (1983, p.24) says,

> . . . despite the small percentage of public social service staff with professional training, there has been a persistent assumption that those with social work credentials could do the job better. A study conducted by Brandeis University noted that the "failure" of public welfare agencies to achieve their objectives has been attributed by some to the lack of professional personnel rather than to the "failure" of social work as a method. . . . High turnover rates have been characteristic, in part as a result of the underutilization of professionals' knowledge and skills.

Gibelman's implication is that adequate job satisfaction can attract and retain sufficient professional social work staff to generate a significant improvement in service delivery outcomes. The *key* is triggering a cycle of job satisfaction that encourages professional staff retention resulting in the improved outcomes which, in turn, reinforces professional staff strength. It is implicit in these remarks that professionalism is marked by staff climate and self-image as validly as it is by hard-data on service delivery outcomes. Gibelman (p.26) goes on to say that

> when a field of services strives, through educational requirements or incentives, to professionalize its staff, conditions in the field must be created that permit and encourage professional practice. . . . The professional training of public agency workers cannot, in and of itself, professionalize the services and conditions of practice of the agency without also modifying the agency structure and milieu that promote professional practice.

In other words, the agency must support the professional development process with real initiatives and incentives that directly reward that development. The agency cannot rely on an intrinsic sense of self-betterment and personal development to substitute for professional acknowledgment and career incentives. This mistake will show up very quickly in sharply falling retention and quality control figures. The actual shape and active utilization of those incentives create a very real professional climate. Weinberg (1974, pp. 473, 482) notes that

> in the past, an accommodation process resulted in that graduate social workers congregated in agencies whose practices and values were perceived as being in harmony with those of the profession. . . . Job satisfaction was significantly associated with the professional climate of the agency.

Job satisfaction and staff retention are elements known to be directly effected by the widely acknowledged stresses of social work, but which are responsive to staff support initiatives.

To determine position and policy on professional development standards, an agency must first determine how it values professional education and the ways it may be utilized. This assessment must be made remembering that less extensive forms of preparation will not only limit the worker's personal career potential and aspirations but will also equally limit that worker's career utility within the agency. It has always been true that investment in trained, quality staff is a strong investment, particularly when human interaction, itself, is the primary tool of successful outcomes.

Now more than ever, a career long on experience but short on adequate professional education will not be sufficient to carry that worker through successful performance and role

changes into supervisory and administrative ranks. A number of writers have pointed this out including Brawley (1982) and Rapoport (1974, p. 514) who says,

> Many social workers do not and cannot remain in the direct-service role. As they move up the professional ladder, other important but less direct helping roles are taken on. . . . Professional advancement as provided through agency structure requires profound shifts in role.

If it is true, as Weinberger (1974) suggests, that adequate professional climate translates into a increased job satisfaction which supports retention, then it is appropriate to examine professional education and career development as primary elements of that organizational climate. Further, it becomes necessary to the purpose of this needs assessment to review the relationship between social work education, professionalism and career development, and to examine what value these have to public agency social workers.

Job Satisfaction and Professional Development

While job satisfaction is linked to a variety of performance and environmental factors, this study will address burnout, retention, professional depersonalization and advancement as elements linked to policy and working climate.

In a study of job satisfaction and burnout on 747 social workers holding BSW and MSW degrees, Himle and Jayaratne (1990) reported higher levels of depersonalization among undergraduate (BSW) than graduate (MSW) social workers. These higher depersonalization levels are thought to contribute to increased burnout and decreased retention.

Although training is not to be confused with a professional education program, Gillespie and Cohen (1984) identified professional in-service training as one of four ways to

prevent worker burnout. The other factors they identified were shortening work hours, reduction of client-staff ratio and changing the function of staff meetings.

As early as 1968, Bertcher and Garvin wrote that the implementation of good training programs geared to improving professional skills not only improves efficiency and effectiveness, but correspondingly improves job satisfaction. "This can reduce the high staff turnover rates so detrimental to agency operation and prevalent among professionals and nonprofessionals" (p.3).

In a 1985 study of job satisfaction factors among 41 African-American female human service agency managers, Wright, King and Berg found that three of five perceived factors of opportunity for advancement were positively related to job satisfaction. It would seem that there is a distinct supportive and predictive relationship between career opportunity and job satisfaction. In reporting the proceedings of a University of Michigan Staff Development Institute, Bertcher and Garvin (1968, p.11) stressed that

> the presence or absence of clearly delineated career lines is a potent factor in influencing staff behavior. Those behaviors which are directly or indirectly related to advancement within a career line are those behaviors which the personnel will most readily learn and retain through practice.

Both education and training have important roles in staff development, satisfaction and retention, as well as the direct agency benefit of reduced errors and increased service efficiency. Staff development has been defined variously and has varying primary methods given the demographic setting and specialty of the social worker benefiting the development.

Michael Austin (1984), formerly at the University of Washington School of Social Work, begins his text on staff development by defining staff development as "the orienting, updating, and upgrading of agency personnel in order to provide the highest quality of

services to clients" (p.1), and as "any process or program to improve staff performance by enhancing work-relevant knowledge and skills" (p.81). He alludes directly to professional development when he includes, as a staff development objective, the preparation and upgrading of employees for more skilled positions and possible advancement.

Bertcher (1988) defines staff development as "a planned process designed to improve the ability of staff members to do their jobs in such a way that they and their organization achieve their goals for clients, and that staff members find their work personally rewarding" (p.4). He is clearly specifying job satisfaction as an outcome of staff development.

He also makes the distinction that staff development can be understood as group growth or as collective individual professional development.

> Staff development can refer to (1) the growth of staff members--either as individuals, as subgroups, or as a total staff group--in relation to their knowledge about . . . doing their job; to (2) enhancing the knowledge, attitudes, or skills of staff members in relation to movement within the organization--including promotion--to other positions; or to (3) the professional development of staff members in relation to their life career, some of which might well be played out as staff members in other organizations (Bertcher, 1988, p.4).

Opportunity and application inevitably shape the possibilities for professional and career development. When the agency's service delivery area includes wildly varying demography and geography, the developmental opportunities will vary considerably as well. Clearly those social workers within commuting range of sizeable cities and/or higher education facilities will have a much "fuller diet" of professional development opportunities than workers in expansive rural settings who will be faced with something closer to a "picnic lunch." As a professional development issue, this has become particularly important since the early 1980s when rural social work became acknowledged as a viable social work

specialty by both practitioners and educators. Martinez-Brawley (1985) says that "a rural emphasis at the undergraduate level is likely to be only an introduction to the universals of the rural specialty," and that it is "more likely to occur at the graduate level" (p.39).

Waltman (1990), also writing on professional development for rural social workers, says that "social workers in rural areas have limited opportunities to satisfy professional development needs through traditional routes employed by their urban counterparts" (p.16). Nevertheless, given the rural setting and subsequent effect of dislocation, professional development may be even more precious not only as an avenue to advancement but as an antidote to isolation and burnout, if not a window on alternative career options.

Waltman goes on to say that "creative use of innovative educational methods will reduce the rural social worker's feeling of isolation and promote awareness of professional standards and development" (p.16). There are clearly important avenues of opportunity for the rural social worker in electronic media-based trainings (e.g., the satellite classroom), accredited in-service trainings, and at-a-distance or community-based advanced study programs.

Regardless, rural social workers must have strong supervisory and administrative support, as well as self-motivation, to make their development efforts fully successful to themselves and beneficial to the agency. It must be remembered that current or probable employment in the field is the essential objective in profession development. Without associated support and employment, professional development becomes personal development.

The Shape of Professional Education

> The search for professional identity may be a means to achieve professional maturity. . . . One of the characteristics of social work as it strives toward professional maturation is its increased "professionalization," . . . "Professionalization" is achieved through professional education, continued in-service training, research and theory-building. This process is unquestionably valuable and important (Rapoport, 1974, p.514).

If one can assume the value of professional education in social work, one must address certain necessary features. Recognizing the problems of access and availability for rural social workers, it should be noted that access problems are not limited to the rural setting. There are general problems to be addressed related to frequent or extended educational leave time. Programs and alternate technologies must be utilized that are as adaptable as possible for the large proportion of workers who are unable to disconnect from their caseloads long enough to undertake large units of professional education.

Professional programs need to have a suitable balance of theory-building and practical application. While theory-building has typically not been a shortfall in academic preparation, it is often as valuable and more difficult to get a practical component. Seigel (1985, p.47) found that when "empirically based practice themes were presented, [students] had more positive attitudes toward research, . . . and were more likely to plan to integrate research into their practice." The academic use of empirical material goes a long way toward bridging the gap between academic preparation and proficient caseload practice.

For professional preparation to suit the professional credential needs of the student or practicing social worker, it must have current relevance and carry an acceptable measure of "legitimacy." Abraham, Pinsky, Rock and Tuzman (1987, p.83) suggested that development "should be organized around issues relevant to the professional needs of social work staff,

including accreditation." Legitimacy is conferred by accreditation. There will be little professional advancement advantage without it.

The spectrum of educational relevance must not only address traditional issues in social work but must be responsive to new and shifting populations and cultural values. Ewalt (1991) has identified three social work labor market trends affecting recruitment and retention and, therefore, affecting the shape of professional social work education. The (a) emerging career orientation of women who "are likely to seek opportunities congruent with a career orientation and to look elsewhere if opportunities for advancement, creativity, increasing pay, and professional development are not available" (Ewalt, p.216). There is (b) a large group of individuals currently changing careers in midlife, coming from other occupations or military retirement, including women moving into/within the workforce. The third important staffing trend is (c) emerging ethnic or immigrant populations whose cultural systems and service needs introduce different values and coping methods for social change. Ewalt quotes Weil saying that "these changes require managers and leaders who can accept diversity and have the ability to work across cultures" (p.216).

Summary

While there have been periods of energetic dissent over the value and need for graduate or professional status in social work, current wisdom supports a high degree of professional development. Quality of services relates directly to quality of staff. A strong case has been made for developing higher retention through the creation of a professional

climate that is attractive to professional level social workers and which provides clearly viable incentives for current employees seeking further career development and advancement.

It is both timely and beneficial to large service delivery systems to critically re-evaluate old staff development methods and agendas. At this time in our social and economic history we are getting remarkably strong and similar messages from such diverse directions as the private corporate sector and the public and human service delivery systems. This message is that a professionally challenged but satisfied staff is the most valuable and traditionally undermanaged resource that organizations have, or have ever had. It has rapidly become common organizational wisdom that retaining and enhancing good existing staff is far more cost effective than replacing and retraining in response to turnover.

As the trained U.S. workforce shrinks and caseloads continue to climb, agencies are being forced to respond to workers' developmental needs in order to attract them, retain them and provide more than minimum standards of service.

As staff and professional development agendas are reviewed and policy beneficially updated, the shape of the changing workforce and the respective *current needs* of social workers *will have to* be actively and successfully addressed. Not to do so is to willingly disarm whatever potential strength can be directed toward burgeoning current human service needs and delivery demands.

OBJECTIVES

Graduate credit needs for WWU trainings were examined using the following objectives.

(a) Do social workers want/need graduate credits upon completion of the institute training or approved WWU short courses?

(b) Do factors of credit transferability, additional outside workload and/or credit costs alter interest in obtaining graduate credits for this type of professional in-service coursework?

(c) What is the nature of professional need for graduate training within the division?

(d) What academic programs do/would social workers choose to develop their careers?

(e) What schools do/would social workers enroll in to pursue their career enhancement agenda?

(f) What percent of social workers have career intentions to remain with DSHS?

(g) Would receiving graduate credit for completion of the institute or approved WWU short courses make a substantial practical and professional contribution to the social workers, the agency/division, and/or the client community at large?

DESIGN AND METHODS

A telephone survey relating to the graduate credit desires and needs of EMFS social workers for trainings provided by WWU was developed . The survey questionnaire was consisted of 36 items, 23 questions directly focused on seven specific objectives relating to matters of graduate credit and 13 questions identifying demographic factors of both the social worker and her/his caseload (see Appendix A: Survey Instrument).

The survey sample was consisted of 354 active EMFS social workers on the DSHS personnel register as of October 1991. The sample was divided into subsamples of 108 social workers (30%) who were enrolled in the first four cycles of the Institute for Social Welfare and the remaining 246 social workers (70%) who were enrolled (or awaiting enrollment) in the subsequent 10 cycles.[2] The workers may also have had WWU trainings while working in other DSHS positions and/or divisions.

Two surveyors administered the questionnaire by phone during business hours to social workers at their offices.

A preliminary report of work in progress was issued to the EMFS training manager at the completion of sampling the first group. For final reporting, data across both subsamples will be processed together and analyzed regionally and statewide. Data has been analyzed and presented as central tendencies and distributions.

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[2] From January through November 1991, the Institute for Social Welfare training (*the Institute*) was offered electively within EMFS. In December 1991 this training became mandatory for all EMFS social workers.

RESULTS

The results are presented in three parts: (I) **Primary Effects**, (II) **Secondary Effects**, and (III) **Demographics**. The *primary effects* report the results of questions directly related to the stated objectives of this study. The *secondary effects* compare data across questions to highlight notable trends.

I. PRIMARY EFFECTS

Undergraduate Credit Enrollment

Of the total 339 social workers who responded to this survey, 266 (87%) reported attending Western Washington University contract trainings (see Figure 1, n=304).[3] Slightly over half (138 of 266, or 52%) reported being made aware, prior to training, that WWU undergraduate credit was available for training (see Figure 2, n=266). A total of 133 (34%) *did enroll* for undergraduate credit. It is important to note that there was a sharp reversal of trend between the first survey sample (cycles 1-4 of the Institute) and second survey sample (cycles 5 and after). Forty-seven out of 75 social workers (63%) in the first sample group enrolled for credit while only 21 of 126 (17%) enrolled in the second sample group (see Figure 3, n=201).

This sharp credit enrollment drop is thought to relate both to a reduction in training contract credit cost support and to a general downturn in training enrollments connected

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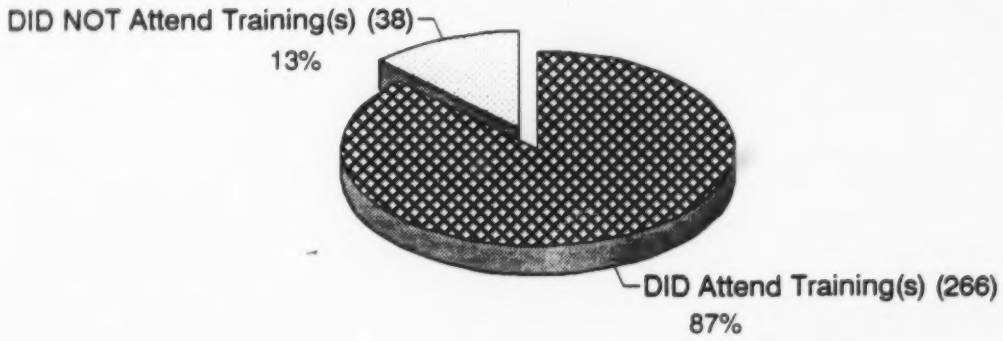
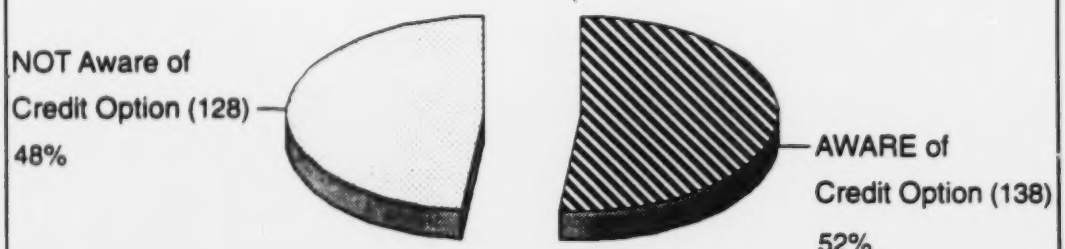
[3] It should be noted that currently the only WWU training provided for EMFS social workers is the Institute for Social Welfare. Some social workers however (may) have experienced WWU trainings while in other positions and/or in other DSHS divisions.

Figure 1
WWU Training Attendance



N=304

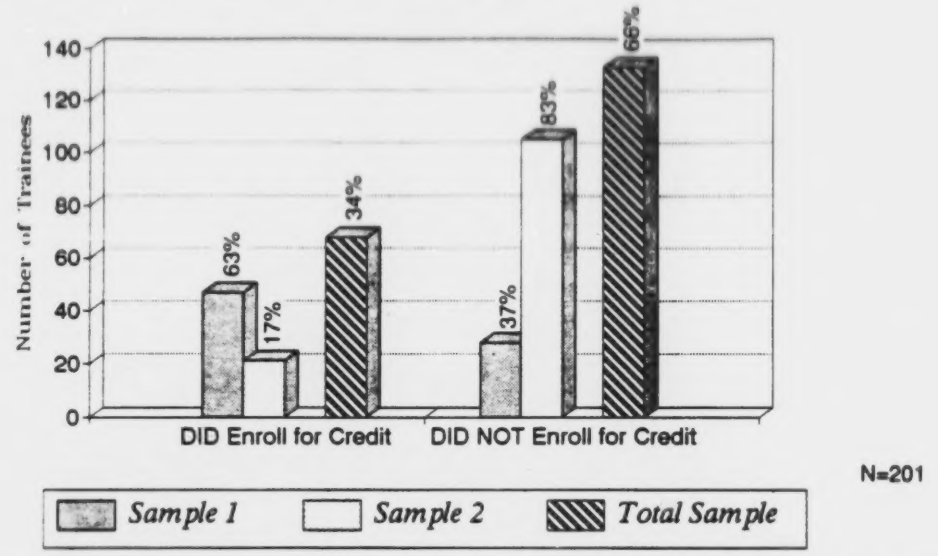
Figure 2
Awareness of Academic Credit Option



N=266

with recessionary DSHS cost reductions.[4] The potential mitigation of enrollment by credit cost is supported by a strong degree of concern over credit cost, as illustrated in Figure 7, p. 25. In December 1991, the Institute training was made mandatory for EMFS social workers. It is not known whether this effected perceptions of credit utility for trainings.

Figure 3
Enrollment for Undergraduate Credit



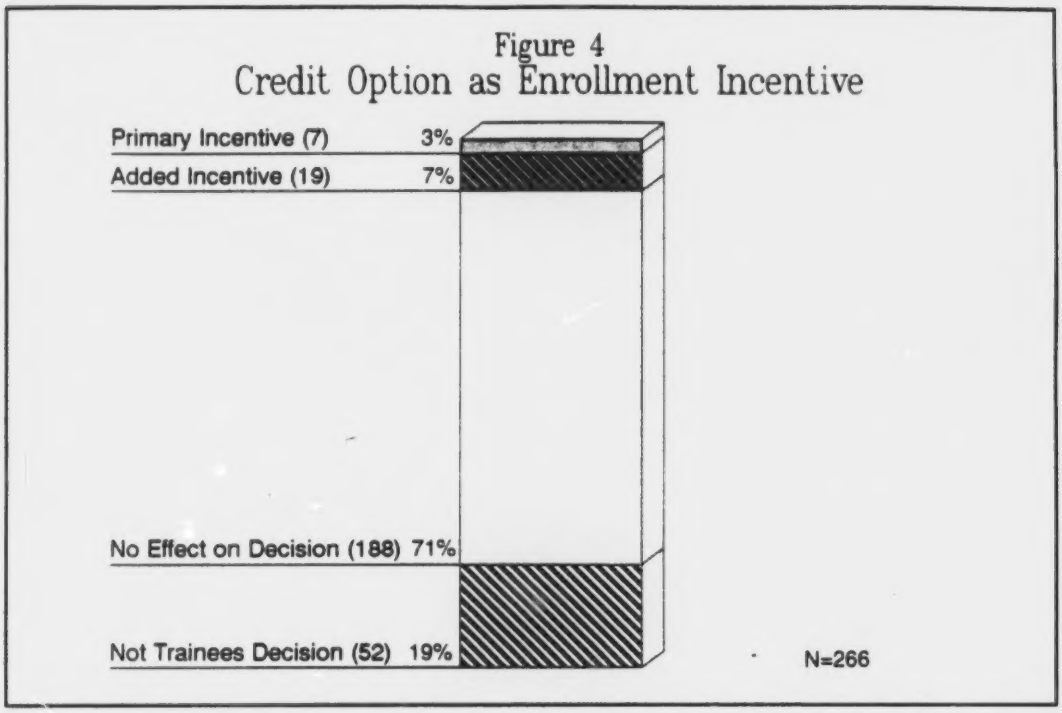
When asked how the availability of university credit effected the trainees' decisions to enroll in training, only 7 (3%) said it was the primary incentive and 19 (7%) said it was an added incentive for enrollment. A majority of 188 (71%) social workers said that a credit option had no effect on their decision to enroll while 52 (19%) social workers said that

[4] The 1989-90 EMFS training contract with WWU supported 100% of credit costs for trainees while the subsequent 1991-92 contract supports only 40% of credit costs. Cycles 1-4 of the institute training fell under the earlier contract while later cycles fall under the current contract.

training enrollment was not their decision (see Figure 4, n=266). The sizes of these latter two groups appear to reflect the following: (a) a perception that the primary benefit of trainings is very practical, (b) the fact that 215 (65%) respondents already have a BA, considerably diminishing the utility of undergraduate credits and (c) the fact that in December 1991 the division made the Institute training mandatory for social workers. These factors appear to heavily mitigate against undergraduate credit as an enrollment incentive.

Figure 4

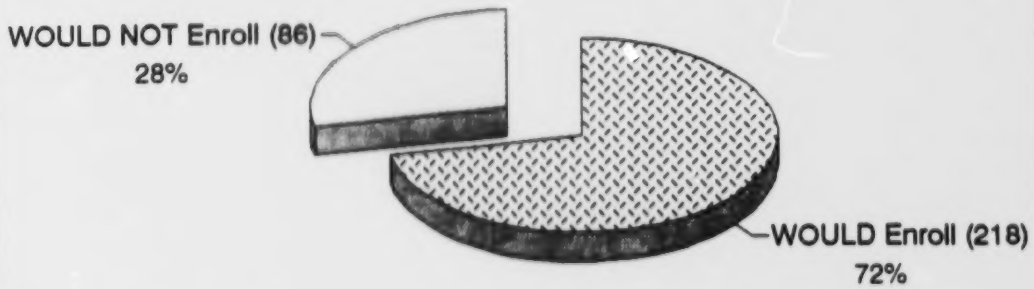
Credit Option as Enrollment Incentive



Factors of Graduate Credit Preference

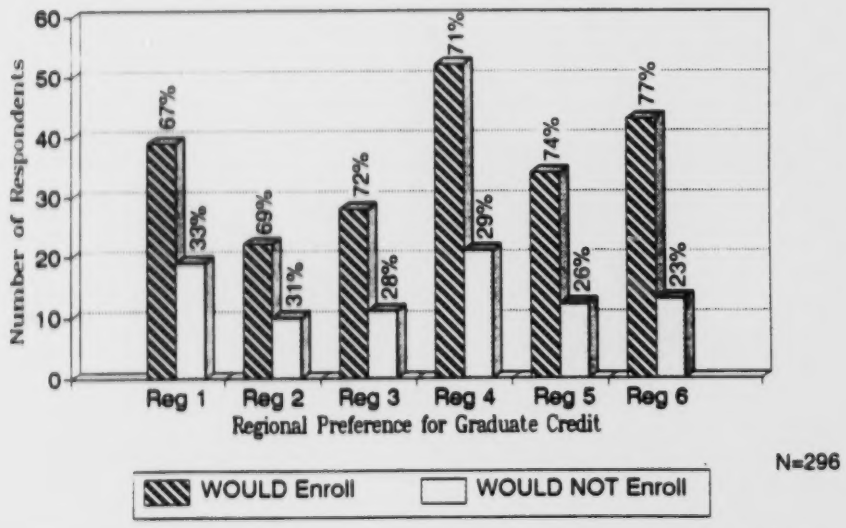
Of 304 social workers statewide, 218 (72%) said they would enroll for WWU trainings for *graduate credit* if they were available at that level (see Figure 5A, n=304). Regionally, the largest *percentage of staff* interested in graduate credits for training was in

Figure 5A
Graduate Credit Preference, Statewide



N=304

Figure 5B
Graduate Credit Preference, By Region



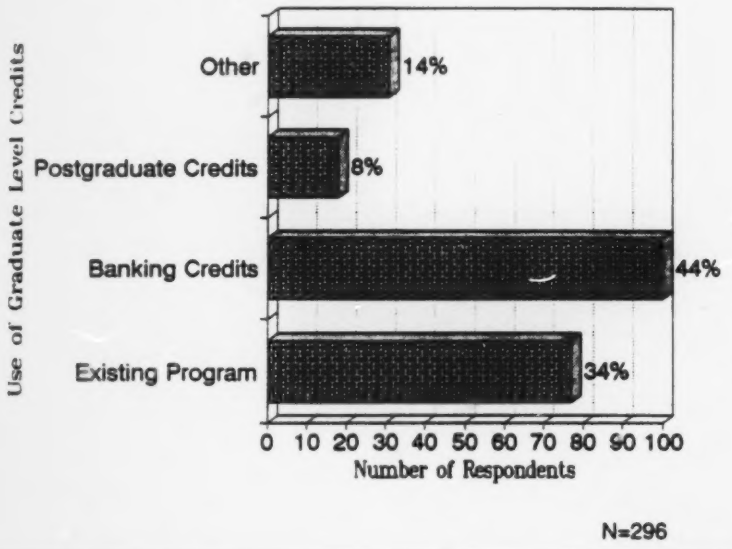
N=296

Region 6 where 43 of 56 respondents (77%) indicated that they would take WWU trainings for *graduate credit.* Regions 3, 4 and 5 all indicated interest in the 71-74% range, with Regions 1 and 2 registering interest at 67% and 69% respectively.

Regionally, the largest *actual numbers* of social workers interested in graduate credits were in Regions 4, with 52, and Region 6, with 43 social workers indicating that they would enroll at the graduate level (see Figure 5B, n=296). These numbers are taken to have primary importance in understanding EMFS educational needs when considering that the social workers are predominately educated at the BA level (Figure J, p.51) and distinctly interested in returning to graduate school (Figures 9A and 9B, p.30).

When asked how graduate credits would contribute to their career plans, 100 (44%) social workers said the would bank them in anticipation of graduate school. Another 77

Figure 6A
Use of Graduate Credits, Statewide

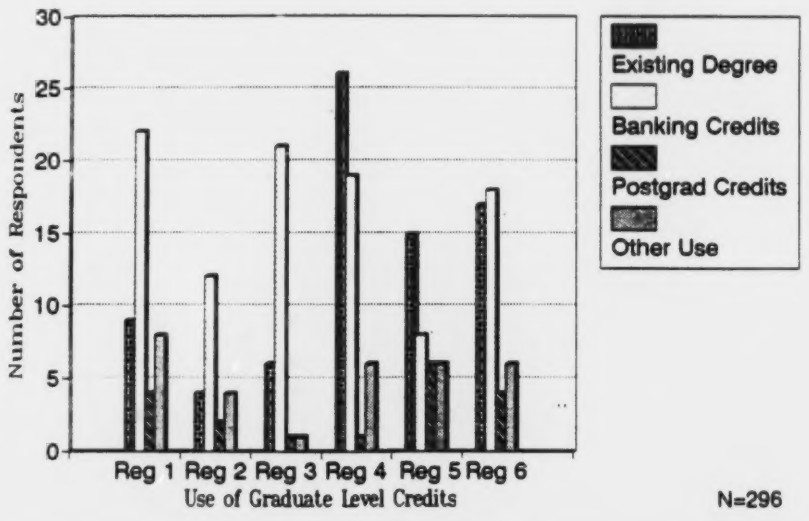


(34%) said they would apply them toward an existing/unfinished graduate or doctoral program. Eighteen (8%) said they would use them as postgraduate credits while 31 (14%) said these credits would contribute in *other* ways (see Figure 6A, n=296).

Of those who would apply the credits toward an existing academic program, 67 (87%) said they would apply them to an existing master's level program while three individuals (4%) would apply them at the doctoral level.

A clear majority of social workers in Regions 4 and 5 would use graduate training credits in an existing program while in Regions 1, 2 and 3 the primary use would be as banked credits in anticipation of graduate school. This corresponds directly to two factors: (a) the availability and access to graduate schools with relevant programs in Regions 4 and 5 compared to their relative inaccessibility in Regions 1, 2 and 3, and (b) the fact that in small or rural offices workers very often do multiple jobs which do not have staff back-up

Figure 6B
Use of Graduate Credits, by Region



that makes educational leave or release time possible. Interestingly, while Region 6 is geographically large and generally rural, social workers were nearly equal in choosing to bank credits or use them on existing or unfinished degrees (see Figure 6B, n=296).

Social workers were asked to rate three factors of *enrollment concern* regarding enrollment for credit at the graduate level. As expressed in Figure 7, those factors were (a) having to pay full credit price (no agency subsidy or assistance); (b) out-of-class work to meet graduate academic standards; and (c) uncertainties regarding transferability of credits.

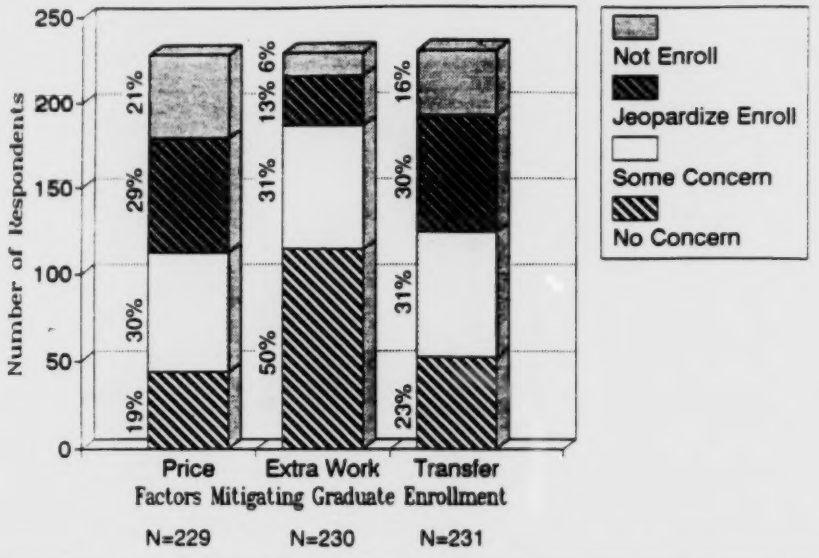
Having to pay full price for credits was the largest mitigating factor with 69 (30%) indicating that it would cause *some concern*, another 67 (29%) indicating that it could jeopardize their enrollment and 49 (21%) indicating that they *would not enroll* as a consequence. Only 44 (19%) social workers were not concerned about credit price (n=229).

Out-of-class work was the least mitigating factor with 115 (50%) workers indicating *no concern* over this factor. Seventy-two (31%) indicated that it would cause *some concern* but that they would still enroll. A modest 29 respondents (13%) felt this factor would jeopardize their enrollment while only 14 (6%) would not enroll as a consequence (n=230).

When asked about *uncertainties regarding transferability of credits*, the response pattern was very similar to the question of price for credit. Seventy-two social workers (31%) had *some concern* while 68 (30%) felt such uncertainties would jeopardize their enrollment for graduate credit and 38 (16%) said they would not enroll as a result. Fifty-three (23%) were not concerned (n=231).

Despite the mental stress and paperwork production of their jobs, social workers were generally least concerned about out-of-class academic work and more concerned about

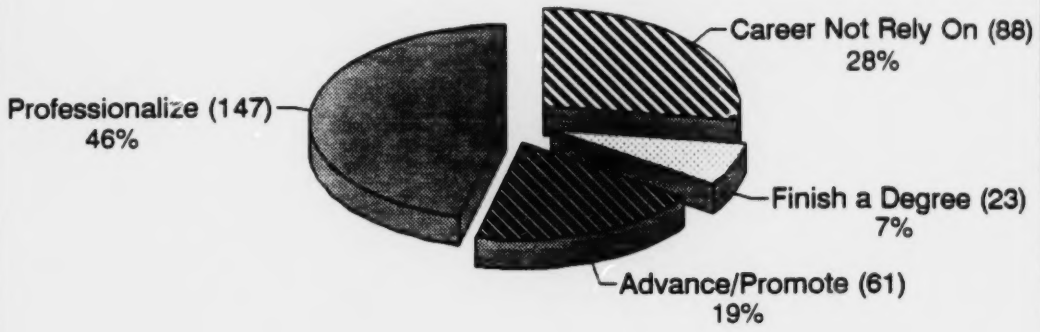
Figure 7
Factors Mitigating Enrollment



practical and technical matters such as credit cost and credit transferability. This may be related to the fact that the nature of public agency social work involves a great deal of reading, writing, meeting and workload stress not entirely dissimilar to demands required in a graduate academic setting. Practical cost and utility may be reflected in these results as characteristic of social workers' decision-making styles.

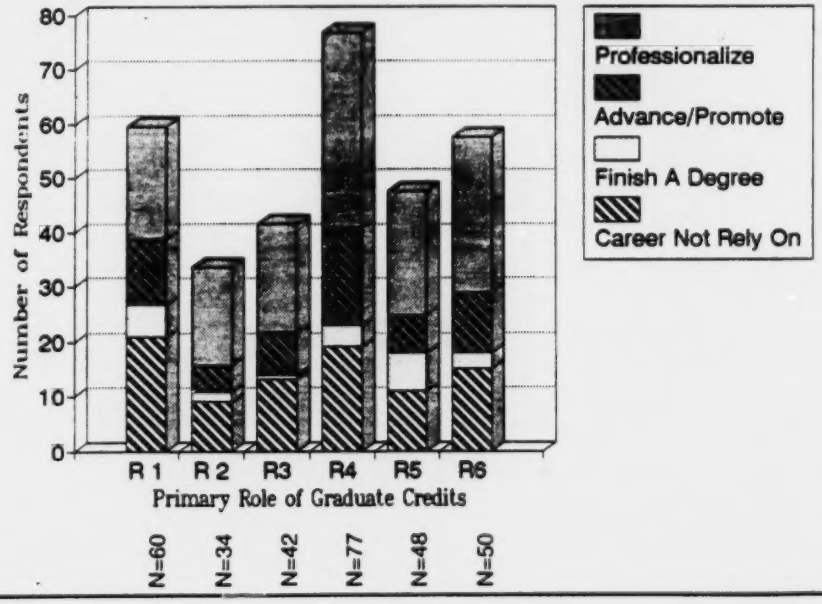
The utility of graduate credits was explored further in a question inquiring about the role that graduate credits would play in career advancement for social workers. Statewide, slightly less than half (147 or 46%) said that "this level of education is necessary to become as professional" [as they] "want or need to be." Sixty-one (19%) said that a graduate degree would cut several years of experience from their advancement requirements. A minority of 23 (7%) said that they need these credits to finish an incomplete graduate degree.

Figure 8A
Role of a Graduate Degree, Statewide



N=319

Figure 8B
Role of a Graduate Degree, By Region



Eighty-eight (28%) of the respondents said that "their career advancement does not rely on a graduate education" (see Figure 8A, n=319). It is assumed that this last category is largely populated by older workers who perceive no advantage in returning to school or obtaining a further professional certification.

Regional results consistently supported professionalization as the primary role of a graduate degree. Other categories were regionally consistent with statewide results. It is notable that a significant regional percentage ranging from 22-36% of social workers said that their careers do not rely on a graduate education. This response may reflect a group of workers whose careers are too advanced to be influenced by further education *and/or* workers who are satisfied with their position and have no desire to further advance their careers in the division or agency. Region 5 had the smallest proportion (22%) of social workers whose careers do not rely on a graduate degree, while finishing a degree had the smallest response (2%) in Region 3. It is noteworthy that *advancement/promotion* received a consistently strong response across all regions (see Figure 8B, n=various/regional).

To complete a profile of preference for graduate credits, a question was asked regarding intention to "return to school for further professional coursework." One hundred eighty-four (61%) respondents indicated an intention to return to school while 118 (39%) did not intend to return to school (see Figure 9A, n=302).

Regionally it is most important to note that *the intent to return to school* consistently outweighed *the intent not to return to school.* This trend was strongest in Region 5 where 31 (67%) social workers planned to return to school. In descending regional order of intent to return to school, Region 3 had 24 workers (65%); Region 4 had 47 workers (64%); Region 6

Figure 9A
Intent To Return To School, Statewide

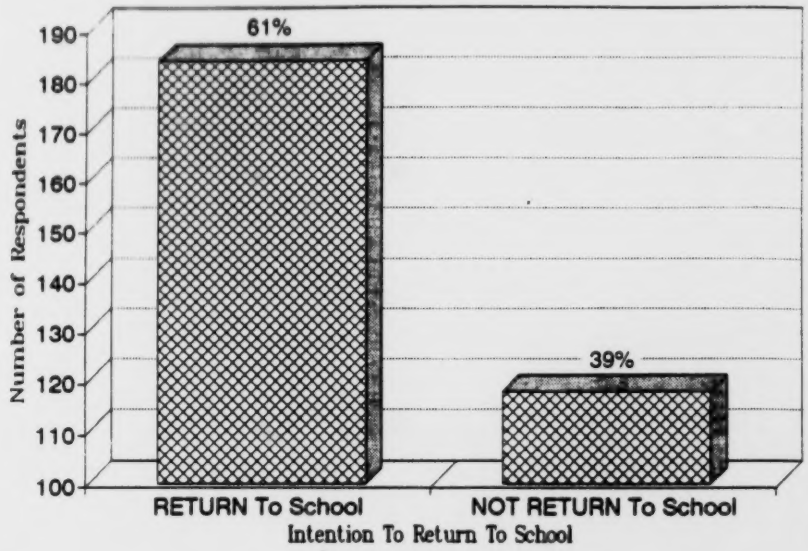
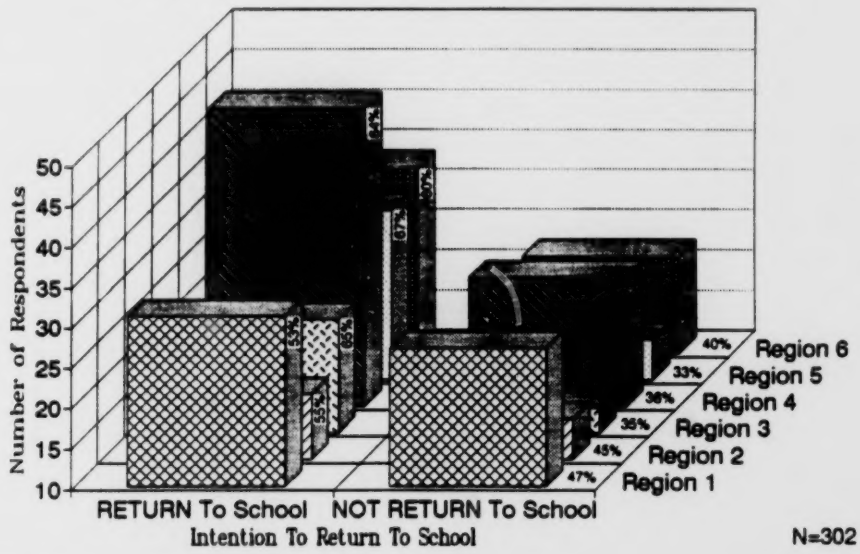


Figure 9B
Intent To Return To School, By Region



had 33 workers (60%); Region 2 had 18 workers (55%); and Region 1 had 31 workers (53%). It is important again to note several general relationships to these results. The highest intentions to return to school were recorded in Regions 3, 4 and 5 -- those regions along the I-5 corridor, concurrent with highest population density, staff sizes, and ease of access to programs and institutions. This can be understood to translate into terms of higher real opportunity for social workers in the higher density regions (see Figure 9B, n=302).

Academic Intentions

When asked what type of degree social workers would pursue, 23 (11.5%) said they would pursue a bachelor's program, while 143 (71.5%) said they would pursue a master's level program, and 22 (11%) would do work in a doctoral program. Eight (4%) said they would pursue continuing education and 4 (2%) indicated *other* educational programs (see Figure 10, n=200).

These numbers should be considered in conjunction with Figure J (n=332, p.51) which indicates that the highest current educational level attained by the majority of social workers in the division is a bachelor's degree (215, 65%). Figure A (n=296, p.41) illustrates that 254 (86%) social workers in the EMFS division are classified at the Social Worker II level. Indications are that the group desiring a graduate degree is very roughly defined in Figures 10, J and A. When asked what academic program they would enroll in, 87 (41%) social workers said they would choose a Master of Social Work (MSW) program (see Figure 11, n=211). This was, by far, the program of choice. Nineteen (9%) would choose a Master of Business Administration (MBA) program, while 17 (8%) said they would

Figure 10
Type of Degree to Be Pursued

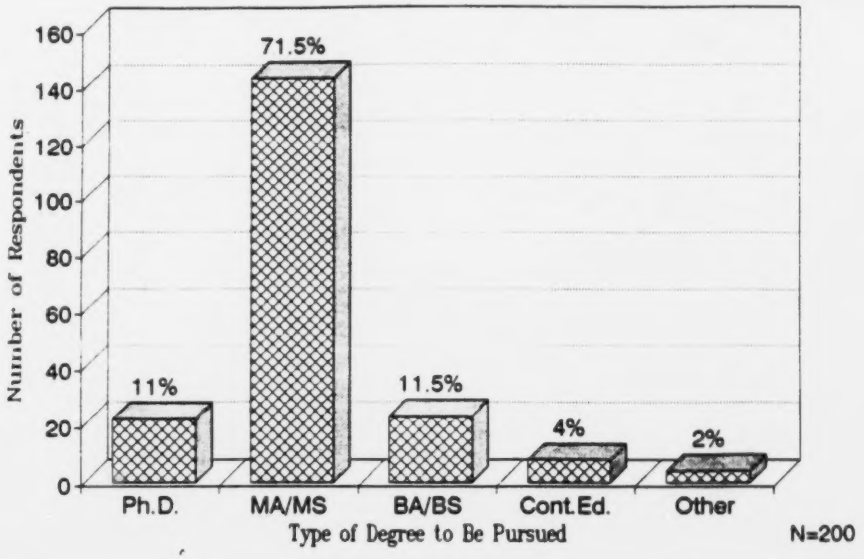
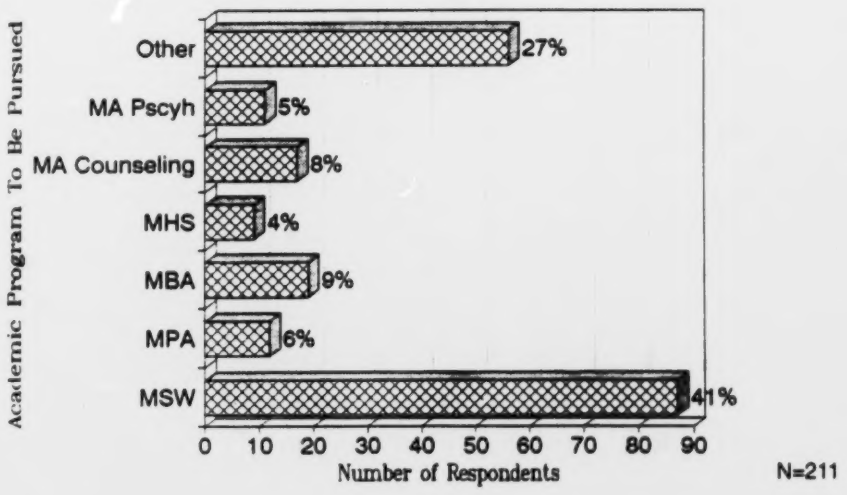


Figure 11
Academic Programs Of Choice



choose a Master of Arts (MA) in Counseling degree. A Master of Public Administration (MPA) program was favored by 12 (6%) social workers, a Master of Arts (MA) in Psychology by 11 (5%), and a Master of Human Services (MHS) by 9 (4%). Other degree programs of choice are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

"Other" Degree Programs of Choice

Graduate Level	**# of Responses**
Computer science	1
Math	1
Public affairs	1
Social sciences	1
Law	2
Education (M.Ed.)	5
Community service	1
Journalism	1
Political science	1
Dietician/public health	1
Marriage & family counseling	1
Doctoral Level	
Ph.D., general psychology	4
Ph.D., clinical psychology	2
Ph.D., industrial psychology	1
Ph.D., political science	2
Ph.D., unspecified	2
Ed.D., unspecified	1

Table 2

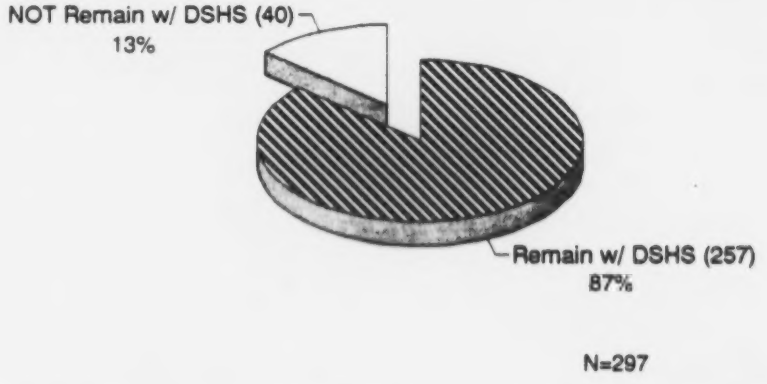
Institutions of Choice

Institutions	# Times Chosen	% of Sample
University of Washington	38	(17.5%)
Western Washington University	31	(14.5%)
Eastern Washington University	20	(9.3%)
Portland State University	6	(2.8%)
St. Martins College	5	(2.3%)
Washington State University	5	(2.3%)
Central Washington University	4	(1.9%)
The Evergreen State College	4	(1.9%)
Seattle University	3	(1.4%)
Antioch University	2	(0.9%)
City University	2	(0.9%)
Gonzaga University	2	(0.9%)
Pacific Lutheran University	2	(0.9%)
Arizona State University	1	(0.5%)
California School of Professional Psychology	1	(0.5%)
Chapman College	1	(0.5%)
Fielding Institute (Santa Barbara)	1	(0.5%)
Heritage College	1	(0.5%)
Johns Hopkins University	1	(0.5%)
Lower Columbia College	1	(0.5%)
New York, SUNY system	1	(0.5%)
Seattle Central	1	(0.5%)
St. Michael's (Vermont)	1	(0.5%)
University of Iowa	1	(0.5%)
University of Oklahoma	1	(0.5%)
University of Puget Sound	1	(0.5%)
University of Portland	1	(0.5%)
Institution currently undecided	63	(29.3%)
An institution that is "convenient"	10	(4.6%)
Out of country (Canada)	1	(0.5%)
In-house or contract training only	2	(0.9%)

The most common institutions of choice were the University of Washington, Western Washington University and Eastern Washington University. The complete list of preferred institutions is shown in Table 2, page 34.

A large majority of 257 (87%) social workers said that their personal career goals involve a continuing career in social work at DSHS (see Figure 12, n=297).

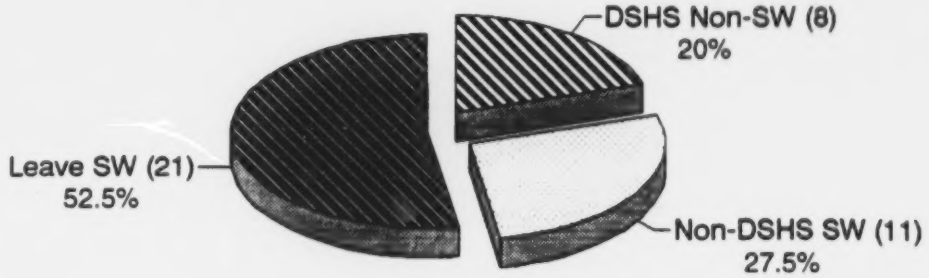
Figure 12
Intent To Remain in DSHS Social Work



Of the 40 (13%) social workers who did not intend to continue in DSHS social work, eight (20%) would move to other positions within DSHS, 11 (27.5%) would continue practicing social work outside the agency, and 21 (52.5%) would like to leave social work entirely (see Figure 13A, n=40).

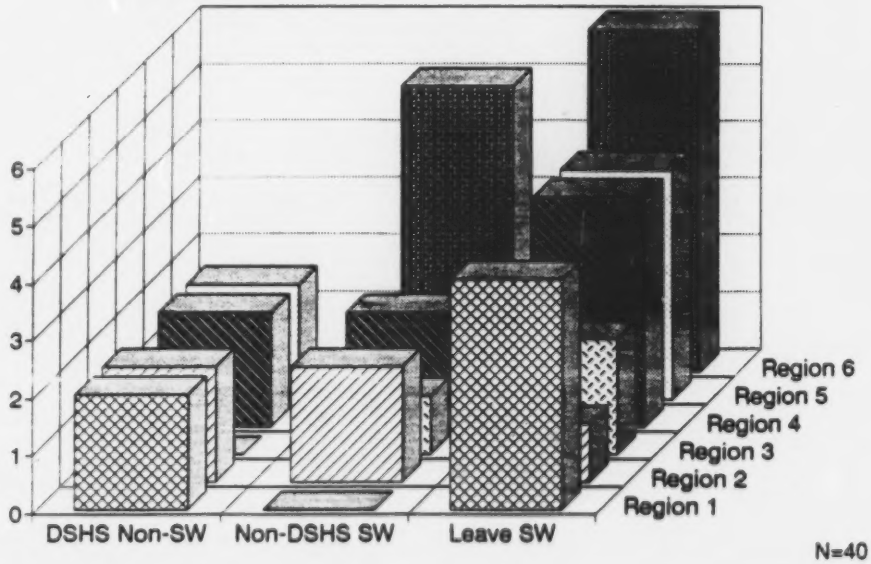
Regions 1, 4, 5 and 6 had the largest numbers of social workers (4-6 per region) desiring to leave social work entirely. Five social workers in Region 6 would choose to

Figure 13A
Options Upon Leaving DSHS SW, Statewide



N=40

Figure 13B
Options Upon Leaving DSHS SW, By Region



N=40

move to social work outside the agency. Regional responses to this question need to be interpreted somewhat tentatively. The numbers involved in these particular responses are relatively small and should not be assumed to accurately reflect regionally distinct patterns without further in-depth study (see Figure 13B, n=40).

Nevertheless, in any organization there is a percentage of the work force who are not satisfied with their current positions or career paths. These responses seem to focus around that group. While the reasons for desiring to leave current positions are often out of reach of organizational remedy, some impact on this group may be expected as a result of staff retention initiatives. This group presumably contributes to the distinct slump in EMFS service time in the 3-5 year category (see Figure H, p.49).

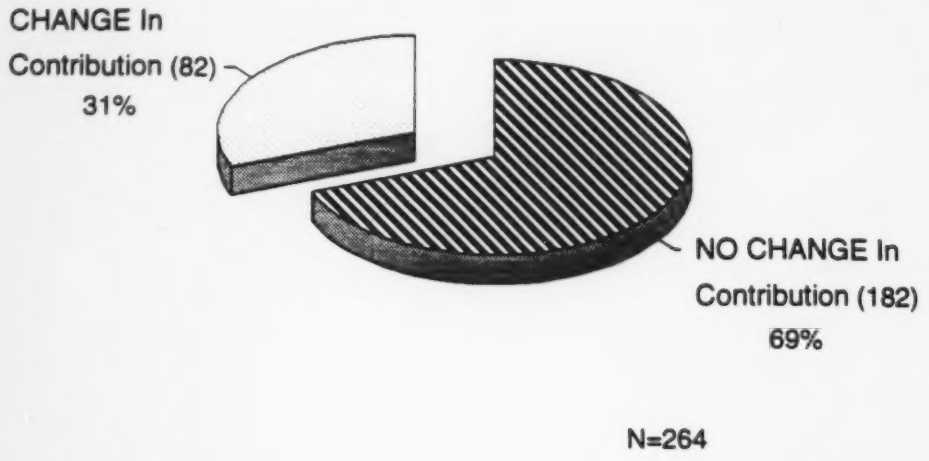
A minority of 82 (31%) social workers felt that a graduate credit option would increase the professional contribution of WWU trainings (see Figure 14, n=264). Social workers were asked to rate the degree of contribution that WWU trainings made to the trainee, to the agency/division and to the client community. They were then asked how a graduate credit option for the trainings would change their ratings.

On a scale of one to seven,[5] the non-credited WWU trainings were rated at 5.4 for contribution. Those who anticipated that a graduate credit option would increase the professional contribution of WWU trainings expressed the increases as follows:

Contribution to the social worker	from 5.4 to 6.4 *(+14.3%)*
Contribution to EMFS/DSHS	from 5.4 to 6.3 *(+12.8%)*
Contribution to the client community	from 5.4 to 6.2 *(+11.4%)*

[5] The scale range ran from "1 = No practical contribution" to "7 = Very strong contribution."

Figure 14
Grad Credit As A Training Enhancement



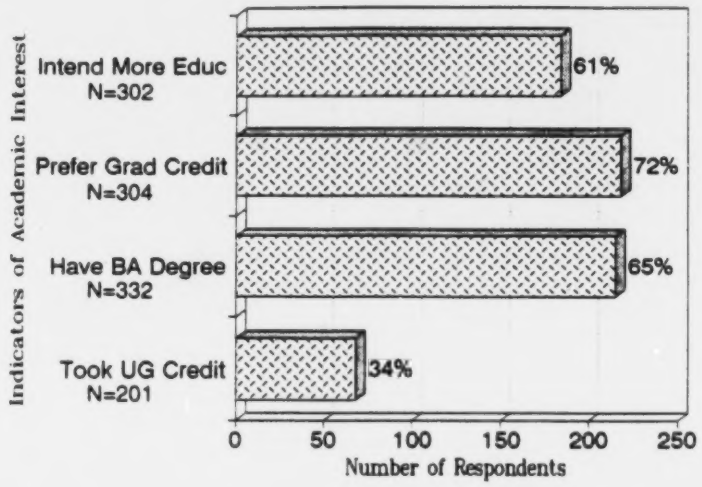
On a different scale of 1 to 7, social workers were asked to rate the degree to which their professional development needs were typical of other social workers in the division.[6] The mean response of 4.9 indicated that, on average, social workers felt that their individual professional development needs were more than moderately typical (4 = moderately typical).

II. SECONDARY EFFECTS

A composite expression of academic interest is shown in Figure 15. While *sixty-eight* (34%, n=201) *social workers enrolled* in the Institute *for undergraduate credit, 218* (72% n=304) said they *would enroll at the graduate level* if it were available, and while *215*

[6] The scale range ran from "1 = Not typical at all" to "7 = Very typical."

Figure 15
Prime Indicators of Academic Interest

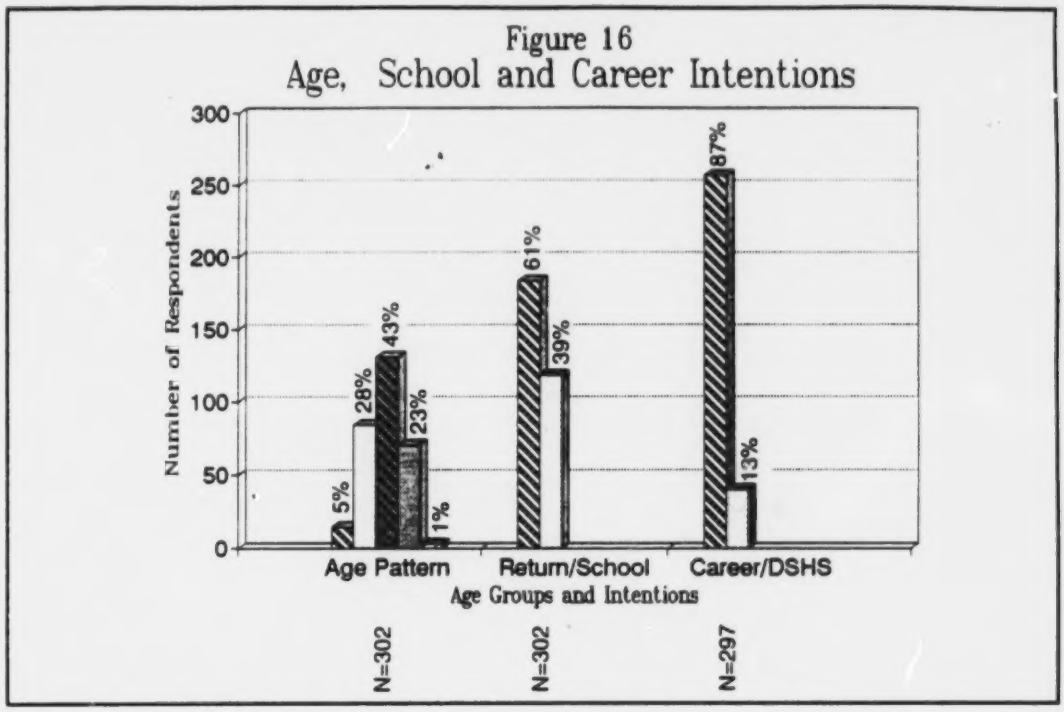


(65%, n=332) of the responding *social workers currently hold a baccalaureate degree, 184* (61%, n=302) said that they *intend to return to school* for further professional coursework. The size of these responses indicates that these groups largely overlap, and clearly suggests that there is a very strong social work staff desire for academic development options. There is *far greater utility and demand for* relevant *graduate credits* than for undergraduate credits. As stated earlier, 147 (46%) social workers considered professionalization to be their primary role for a graduate degree (Figure 8A, p.28). This suggests a currently inadequate professional staff sense that, if remedied, can be expected to improve both performance and retention measures.

Figure 16 illustrates the age distribution of the current EMFS social workers, the number of social workers who intend to return to school and the number of workers whose

career goals involve social work at DSHS. The largest two age groups in the division are the 21-30 and 31-40 year old groups. One hundred eight-four (61%, n=302) social workers intend to return to school and 257 (87%, n=297) workers intend to remain in social work careers with the agency. Social workers' desires for further professional education are underscored by an age pattern and career intentions that, if supported, can contribute retained experience and time in service that will increase the social work strength of the division.

Figure 16

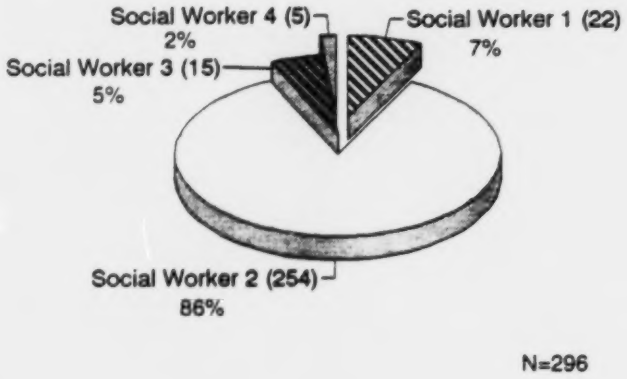


III. DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographic questions were designed to reflect characteristics of the current EMFS social worker (SW) staff as well as the client base that workers are serving. The single largest job classification in the EMFS division is the SW2 group with 254 (86%) of the 296

social workers responding. There were 22 SW1s (7%), 15 SW3s (5%), and only 5 SW4s (2%). See Figure A, n=296. The professional development needs and desires of the SW2 group are clearly the most prevalent, due to size. Due to sheer size, the needs of the SW2 group are the most important for the division to address as career and supervisory employees will come, almost entirely, from it. Supporting the developmental needs and goals of this group can most significantly impact measures of service delivery quality, staff retention and career commitment.

Figure A
Job Classifications of Social Workers



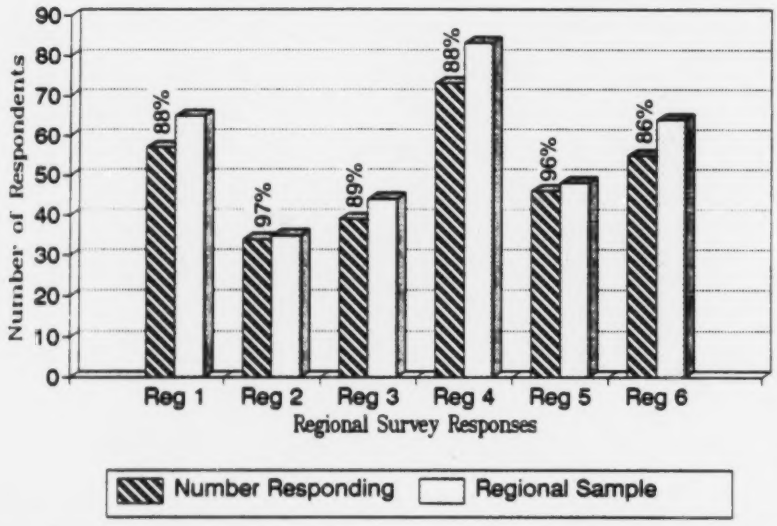
Job class, workforce age pattern and intention to remain in DSHS social work are all factors thought to be primary to understanding the career development needs of EMFS social workers and the related service delivery productivity of the division.

Figure B (n=304) illustrates the number of social workers that responded to this survey as compared to the sample per region. In declining order of size sample size, 73 out of 83 (88%) social workers responded in Region 4; followed by

57 out of 65 (88%) in Region 1;
55 out of 64 (86%) in Region 6;
46 out of 48 (96%) in Region 5;
39 out of 44 (89%) in Region 3; and
34 out of 35 (97%) in Region 2.

These numbers correspond very closely to the staff sizes in these regions. Although repeated telephone calls were made, as necessary, to obtain social worker interviews, some contacts failed due to workers having left the system or continuing to be unavailable.

Figure B
Survey Response Rate, By Region

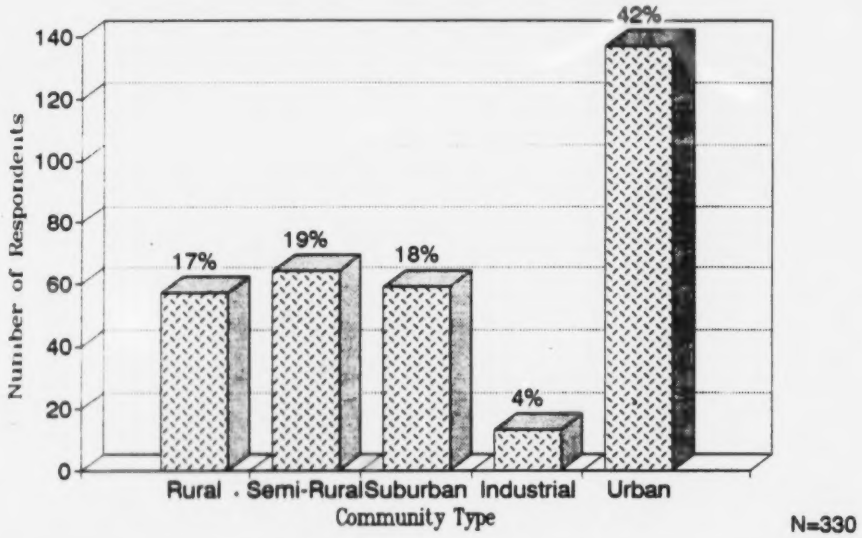


The largest demographic caseload type was clearly *urban* comprising 137 (42%) of the total responses. In declining order, other demographic caseload types were

semi-rural with 64 responses	(19%);
suburban with 59 responses	(18%);
rural with 57 responses	(17%); and
industrial with 13 responses	(4%).

These results correspond closely to population density areas and related CSO staff sizes (see Figure C, n=330). Community type definitions appear in Appendix A, Survey Instrument, question 12.

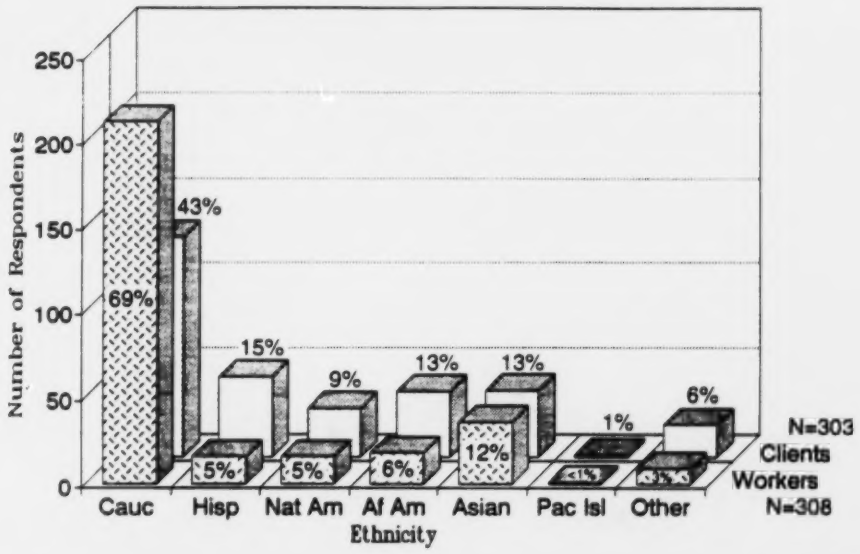
Figure C
Caseload Community Type



Workers were asked to identify their own ethnicity and the predominant ethnicity represented in their caseloads. It was generally found that the ethnicity ratio between social workers and their clients is considerably in favor of Caucasian workers. The ethnicity of

social work staff to clients was most proportionate among Asian Americans and most disproportionate among Hispanic Americans. *Providing and supporting professional development opportunities for non-Caucasian staff can only enhance career commitment among non-Caucasian EMFS social work staff*, as well as greatly improving service delivery to non-Caucasian client populations (see Figure D, client n=303, worker n=308).

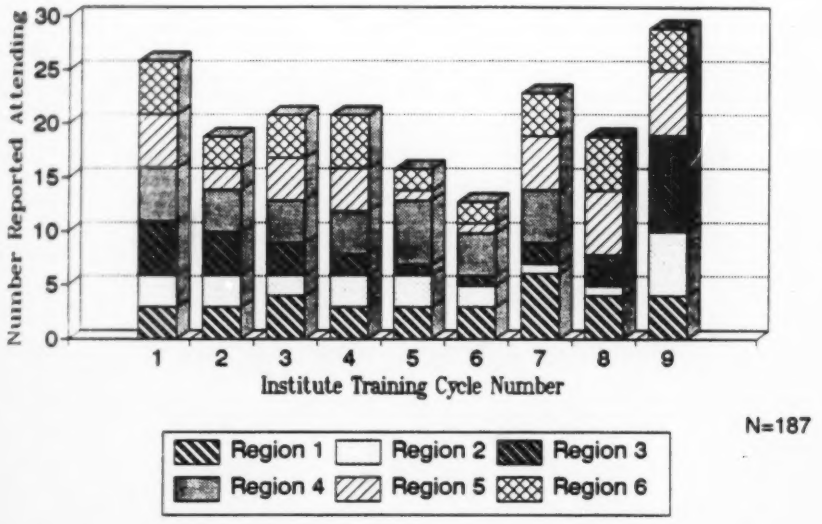
Figure D
Worker and Client Ethnicity



As the majority of clients (57%) were non-Caucasian, the developed strength of non-Caucasian professional staff must be seen as both an asset and a measure of preparedness to, in fact, effectively translate both service delivery regulations and program opportunities across cultural interfaces. *The importance of this factor as a professional staff development objective should not be underestimated.*

A total of 187 social workers report having attended the Institute for Social Welfare during the first nine of fourteen contracted cycles. The Institute was first offered as an optional training in January 1991 and was made mandatory for all division social workers in December 1991. As reported by these workers, attendance has varied from a low of 13 to a maximum of 29 participants per cycle (see Figure E, n=187).[7] Regions 1 and 2 report considerably more expense and release time problems for workers to attend the Institute due to cross-state travel distances, seasonal weather complications and multiple office task responsibilities that are not encountered on the same scale in Regions 3, 4, and 5. Being

Figure E
Institute Training Cycle Attendance

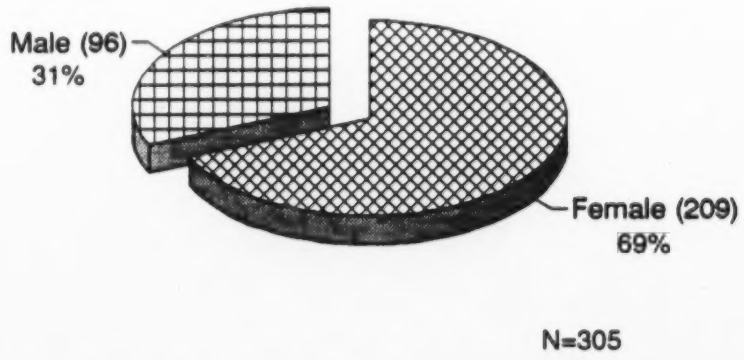


[7] Under the current WWU/PSSRDT training contract, 14 Institute for Social Welfare training cycles are planned. The time frame of this study was only relevant to individuals who had scheduled/attended through cycle 9.

geographically diverse and largely rural, Region 6 experiences some of these problems although these are mitigated by its western location and relatively more clement winter travel conditions.

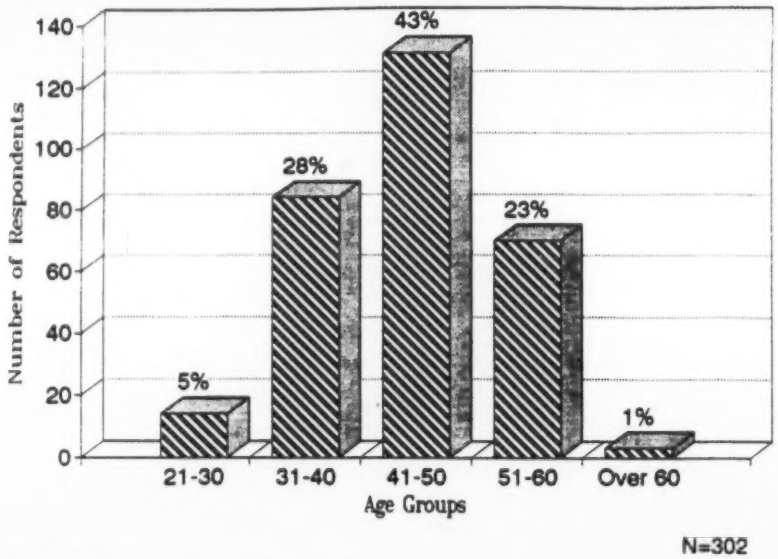
This study found that the EMFS social work staff is predominantly female with 209 (69%) women and 96 (31%) men (see Figure F, n=305).

Figure F
Social Work Staff, By Gender



The age pattern of the social work staff represents a relatively balanced distribution. There were 131 social workers in the largest age group, the 41-50 year old group (43%). There were slightly more workers in the 31-40 age group (84 or 28%) than the 51-60 age group (70 or 23%). The 21-30 age group is relatively small (14 or 5%) suggesting that public agency social work has not strongly attracted new workers until their 30s (see Figure G, n=302).

Figure G
Social Workforce Age Profile



This result also indicates that a considerable number of social workers do not remain in their social work positions past middle age or until retirement. Several conclusions may be drawn. Despite the fact that 257 (87%) social workers said their career goals were to remain in DSHS social work, there is a strong tendency in large public service agencies to carry career employees *upstream*, out of frontline positions and into supervisory or management positions. This natural career tendency utilizes the experience of those with time in the system. It is concluded that some of the drop in the 51-60 age group is due to advancement out of social work positions into other career positions *within* the division and/or agency.

Agency support for academic and professional development opportunities can be expected to strengthen the skills needed for either advanced social work or advancement into

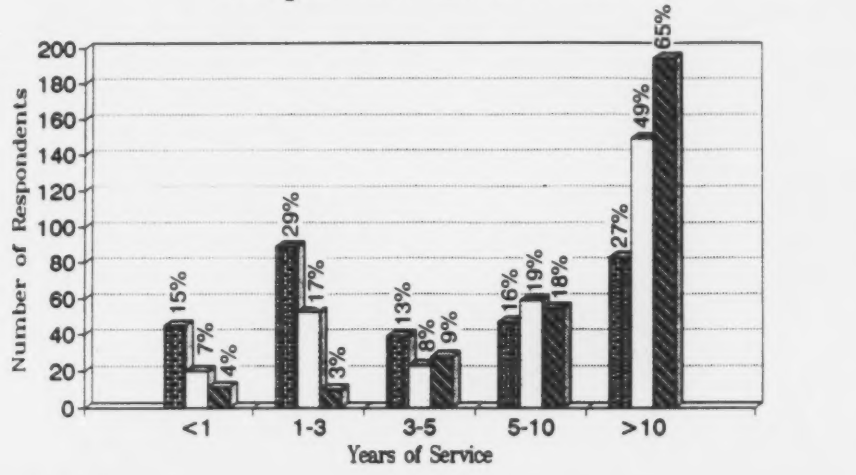
supervision or administration. It is important to note that the 31-40 and 41-50 age groups not only comprise the current majority of workers seeking educational and professional development, but together they potentially represent considerable professional impact on the management and proficiency of service delivery in the next 1-3 decades, before these workers have all passed out of the system. Supporting these workers' development will maximize their *time in*, and *contribution to*, EMFS/DSHS service delivery. To ignore these workers' developmental needs is commensurate with investing in a wasting asset as commitment to jobs and the quality of job performance will otherwise often stagnate and/or contribute to worker attrition.

Figure H (n=303, 304, and 298) expresses measures of comparative time in social services and provides several interesting views of professional experience of EMFS social workers. Illustrated trends indicate that both time in DSHS/state employment and time in EMFS social work climb through three years of service. However, between 3 and 5 years, worker numbers drop significantly, only to rise again in the 5-10 year category and becoming the highest in the category of 10 years or more experience.

The sharp drop in worker numbers in the 3-5 year category is perceived as representing the crux period for worker retention, when social worker burnout and attrition is highest, as well as the period during which many workers make career decisions regarding a commitment to longer career-oriented employment with the division or agency. The drop in the 3-5 year category is so sharp as to be considered *a staffing message that should not be overlooked*. Some of this drop must be related to the larger and difficult dynamics of social worker burnout. Nevertheless, some of this drop must be understood as relating to specific

staff development issues and can be addressed through an improved staff development agenda. Increased retention should be measurable.

Figure H
Comparative Service Time

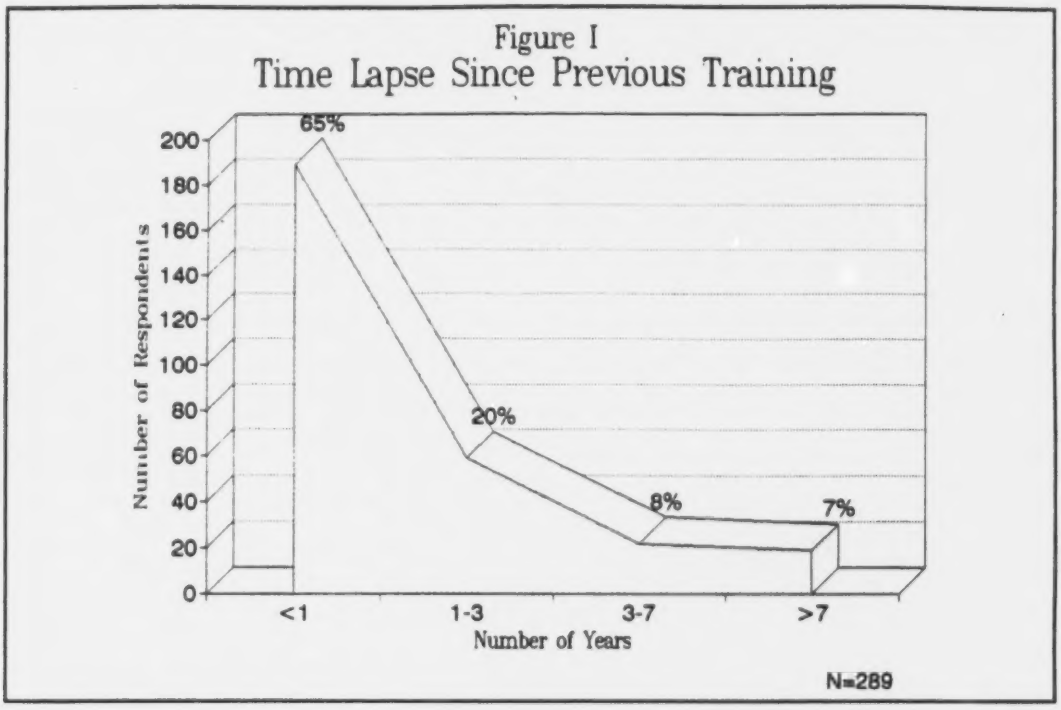


Differences between the shorter and longer service time categories tell us that workers in the shorter service time categories have less related social service experience with relatively more social service time invested as EMFS social workers. Conversely, the longer service time categories reflect career employees with more service time elsewhere in the DSHS/state employment system than in the division itself, as well as a considerable amount of related social service experience.

The majority of social workers (189 or 65%) have attended a WWU training within the last year. Fifty-nine (20%) most recently attended between one and three years ago.

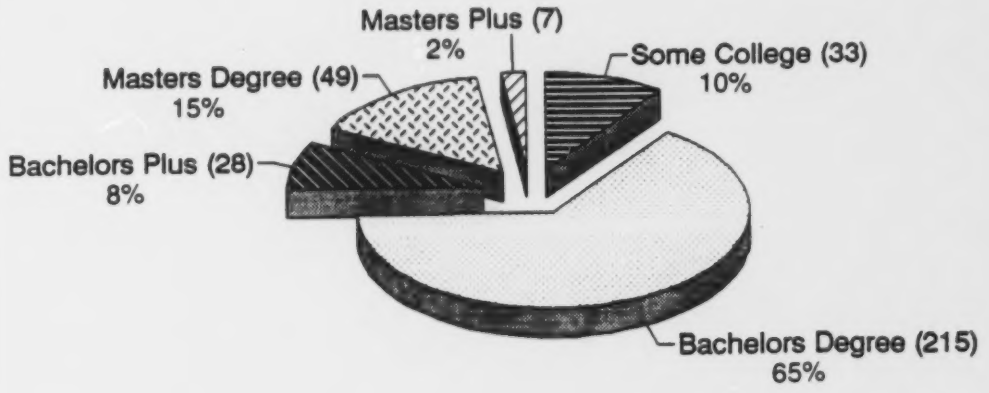
Twenty-two social workers (8%) have not been to training for a period of 3-7 years and 19 (7%) have not been to training in over seven years (see Figure I, n=289).

Figure I
Time Lapse Since Previous Training



This study found that a majority 243 social workers (73%) have a BA degree or a BA plus extra credits while only 56 social workers (17%) in the EMFS division have a Master's degree or higher. Thirty-three (10%) social workers have either no college education or less than a baccalaureate degree (see Figure J, n=332). This is a very notable fact, particularly recalling the results reported in Figures 15 (p.39) and 16 (p.40) which revealed a strong intention to obtain more professional education, a very strong preference for *graduate credit* for WWU trainings, an intention to remain in a career with DSHS/EMFS, and an age pattern that could produce measurable beneficial returns to the division/agency based directly on maximizing these opportunities.

Figure J
Education Level of Social Workforce



N=332

SUMMARY BY OBJECTIVES

(a) *Do social workers want/need graduate credits upon completion of the institute training, or approved WWU Short courses?*

Throughout the division, 266 (87%) social workers have attended WWU trainings. Of those who had WWU training experience, 138 (52%) workers reported being made aware of a credit option prior to attending. One hundred thirty-three (34%) chose to enroll for undergraduate credit overall although 188 (71%) said that the credit option had no effect on their decision to go to training. Further examination is needed into the drivers behind a marked reversal in the credit enrollment trend from the first to the second half of this study. Recessionary budget pressures and the July 1991 EMFS/WWU training contract reduction in credit cost subsidy (from 100% to 43%) are clearly thought to have suppressed credit enrollment.

Nevertheless, 218 (72%) social workers said that they *would enroll in training at the graduate level* if that option was available. Regionally, the largest *proportion* of social workers interested in graduate credits was seen in Region 6 while the largest *number* of interested social workers was in Region 4.

(b) *Do factors of credit transferability, additional outside workload and/or credit costs alter interest in obtaining graduate credits for this type of professional, in-service coursework?*

The requirement of out-of-class academic work produced the least concern in social workers' potential decisions to register for graduate credit. The factors of paying full price

for credits and uncertainties over transferability of credits produced strong concern and potential enrollment jeopardy but would not appear to outrightly restrict enrollment[8]. This result is taken to mean that workers are not overly concerned over academic workload as much as potential educational management problems. These results suggest that despite the well-known heavy workloads in social work, it is important to note that social workers appear ready to accept additional outside academic work if technical problems are minimized.

(c) *What is the nature of professional need for graduate training within the division?*

The predominant contributions of graduate credit for social workers was either banking the credits in anticipation of graduate school or applying them toward an existing, unfinished graduate degree. The distinct priority use of graduate credits in Regions 4 and 5 was toward an unfinished graduate degree while in Regions 1, 2 and 3 banking credits was the clear priority. Region 6 was almost evenly matched between applying the credits directly and banking them.

Across the board the predominant *role of a graduate* degree in social workers careers was to become as professional they felt they needed or wanted to be. One hundred sixty-two (64%) social workers said that they have plans to return to school for further professional coursework. Region 5 had the *highest percentage* of workers intending to go back to school while Region 4 had the *largest number* of workers intending to return to school.

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[8] No agency subsidy, assistance or position backup as a working or on-leave employee.

These results very clearly indicate that a majority of workers are involved, or plan to become involved, in a graduate level program and would enroll in graduate credited trainings with the intent to apply the credits as such.

(d) *What academic programs do/would social workers choose to develop their careers?*

The Master of Social Work degree was the major program of choice by those intending graduate education. Master of Public Administration (MPA), Master of Business Administration (MBA) and Master of Arts/Counseling (MA) degrees each represented 9-10% and Master of Public Administration, Master of Arts/Psych and Master of Arts/Counseling each represented 5-6%.

(e) *What schools would social workers enroll in to pursue their career enhancement agenda?*

In order of preference the top three institutions of choice for professional education were the University of Washington, Western Washington University and Eastern Washington University. Twenty-seven different institutions were named although the largest single group (29%) of social workers was currently undecided on an institution. The full array of choices is presented in the Table I, Institutions of Choice, page 32.

(f) *What percent of social workers have career intentions to remain with DSHS?*

A very strong majority said that their personal career goals involve a continuing career in DSHS social work. Of those not planning to continue in social work with the agency, eight social workers intend to remain with DSHS doing non-social work while 11 intend to do social work outside DSHS and 21 intend to leave social work altogether.

Region 6 had five social workers who intend to do social work outside the agency. Regions 1, 4 and 5 had four and Region 6 had six social workers that intend to leave social work entirely.

(g) *Would receiving graduate credit for completion of the institute or approved WWU short courses make a substantial practical and professional contribution to the social workers, the agency and division, and/or the client community at large?*

On a rating scale of 1-7[9] a minority of social workers felt that a graduate credit option would make a measurable difference in the contribution of the trainings. That group predicted a 14.3% increase in the training contribution to social workers, a 12.8% increase in contribution to the agency/division and an 11.4% increase to the client community.

Trainings generally received high ratings for contribution. Those who felt there *would be a change* in the contribution of trainings with a graduate credit option rated the enhanced professional contribution levels at from 6.2 to 6.4 on the scale of seven. Those

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[9] The rating scale range ran from "1 = No practical contribution," to "7 = Very strong contribution."

who felt that there *would be no change* in the contribution consistently rated the contribution levels at 5.4.

IMPLICATIONS AND GOALS FOR EMFS STAFF DEVELOPMENT

The following implications and goals are based on the results of this needs assessment. They contain both initial and ongoing means to significantly impact staff professionalization and satisfaction. Fundamental trends in the expected results will be measurable improvements in career commitment, staff retention, and quality of social service delivery. Validation of these improvement trends will depend upon a clear, ongoing and consistent expression of commitment to staff development by both the EMFS division and the agency.

The real value of this expression of commitment should not be underestimated as social workers and general staff will read it as a statement of support and values by the division and the agency. The value of consistency in supporting a staff development agenda is that it combats the corrosion of worker confidence that often occurs when staff support programs are initiated and then reduced or abandoned. *Productive outcomes depend upon* the expression of commitment reflecting *real, available and ongoing options* for workers' professional development.

As service delivery demands continue to escalate concurrent with economic restrictions, addressing improvement of staff proficiency and job commitment becomes urgent. In both the private and public sectors, an increasing number of organizations are reassessing the value and nature of proactive staff development as a matter of wise management and regeneration of a highly valuable primary resource.

In human service organizations, the raw materials needed to produce and deliver services is strictly limited to public funding and staffing. While public funds are an

expendable resource (however limited), it is extremely important that *staff be valued as the only non-expendable and regenerative resource that the agency has*. The costs and quality of service delivery are very much functions of staff proficiency, job satisfaction and commitment, as they are of funding and social work staff to caseload ratio.

As such, *a fundamental issue in managing staff*, as a primary resource, *becomes the continuous process of staff development*. To ignore this clearly invites higher error and staff turnover rates with subsequent and significantly higher related training costs and direct supervision time. The real cost to the division of higher error levels, turnover and burn-out rates translates into a higher draw on the expendable resource of already precious public funds. While it is given that funds will be expended, staff should not be. The existence and success of a staff professional development agenda is very largely an issue of cost effectiveness and accountability.

The following strategies are recommended to develop staff strength via academic and professional development.

- Create an *EMFS mission statement on staff development* thrusts and commitment. Distribute it to all CSOs. This statement will create a bridge to existing division and agency structure while expressing a clear proactive commitment to professional staff development. As well, it should specify the nature of advancement opportunities related to such development.
- Establish an *EMFS professional development taskforce* which will
  - (a) Examine the professional development needs of social workers, and other staff, in greater depth.

(b) Establish a division-wide professional development coordinator whose duties would include the aggregation and dissemination of current information on all relevant professional development opportunities and program requirements. These should include formal academic programs, credited and non-credited in-service training programs and information, continuing education classes and programs offered through public and private institutions, and special certification programs. This individual would regularly announce, post and update professional development information to all CSOs as well as develop liaison relationships and promote professional program incentives with appropriate educational and training institutions.

(c) Establish regional professional development specialists who are knowledgeable about all available academic and professional development options both within and outside the region. These individuals will, as a primary part of their job duties, assemble and update information and contacts on programs of benefit to workers in each region as well as research problems and questions of social workers (and other staff) relating to professional development programs of potential benefit to them. These individuals should be active taskforce members and liaisons to professional programs and institutions as well as coordinate with and support the EMFS professional development coordinator in the development and promotion

of program incentives with appropriate educational and training institutions. These specialists might best be housed in the regional offices and perform these functions as part of other job duties, as demands require.

(d) Maintain external academic counseling contacts for social workers in each region with appropriate academic, career and/or program counselors associated with relevant educational institutions.

(e) Promote and enhance the use of professional certification and other development options for hiring and advancement in division-related state personnel categories.

(f) Actively support collaboration between academic institutions offering relevant professional programs including encouraging transferability of credits.

(g) Provide for full or partial academic credit cost coverage in training contracts engaged by the division.

(h) Investigate and promote distance learning options (e.g., correspondence, satellite, video-based) in remote or local areas where workers' development options are impacted by inability to access institutions and/or programs.

- Support and encourage

(a) the development of more MSW and human service-related graduate level programs in state-funded academic institutions.

(b) distance learning and external degree options in existing public and private MSW, and related graduate level, programs.

(c) the acceptance and transferability of professional training credits and experience into existing MSW, and related graduate level, programs.

- The division-wide professional development coordinator and regional professional development specialists should manage information and serve the staff development needs for all regular EMFS staff positions, not just social workers.
- *Develop* all possible *options for* part-time and full-time *educational leave* as well as position back-up.
- *Place* particular *emphasis on* the support and enhancement of *professional development options for ethnic minority workers* and/or workers who work especially with ethnic minority populations. Due to the high percentage of non-caucasian clients served by DSHS, it is of particular importance that both the department and division place strong emphasis on professionalizing workers who are of, or specialize in, services to ethnic minority clients. It is very important to emphasize the value and impact of a high level of intercultural sensitivity and professional skill among workers serving non-caucasian populations.
- *Undertake* individual worker *Professional Development Plans* which will be examined, reviewed and updated as part of every job performance evaluation. Workers should feel that the division is making proactive efforts to support

their Professional Development Plans and that they are proceeding in building a career with the agency, if that is their objective. This planning should focus very actively on workers with three to seven years of EMFS experience and attempt to combine both the needs and desires of the worker with the goals of the agency and division. There should be no performance evaluation penalty to workers for not making career decisions or declarations.

- *Integrate new into existing professional development options* and incentives for workers. Options and agency structure currently exist that should be acknowledged and utilized as any new programming is generated.
- *Maintain* the focus of professional development planning in the EMFS division on program access, affordability, practical career opportunity, and *a general balance of utility to both the social worker and the division.*

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Survey Instrument

Appendix B: Narrative Response Catalog

APPENDIX A: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

WWU / PSSRDT Career Enhancement Project

EMFS Graduate Credit Telephone Survey

* * * * *

Sample Code # _____ Dataline _____

CSO: _____ Interview Date _____

Data Logged Date _____ Notes Logged: [ ]Yes [ ]No

* * * * *

1. **Have you attended any WWU training sessions in your position as an EMFS Social Worker?**

   ____ Yes (go to 1a.) ____ No (go to 3.)

   1a. **Prior to attending the Institute, or other WWU trainings, were you made aware that they were available for undergraduate college credit?**

   ____ Yes (go to 1b.) ____ No (go to 2.)

   1b. **If yes, did you enroll for college credit?**

   ____ Yes ____ No

2. **How did the availability of university credit effect your decision to enroll in the WWU trainings?**

   ____ It was not my decision to attend.

   ____ It had no effect on my decision to attend.

   ____ It was an added incentive to enroll.

   ____ It was a primary incentive to enroll.

3a. **If the Institute, or other WWU trainings, were made available <u>for graduate credit</u>, would you register to take them at that level?**

   ____ Yes (go to 3b-e) ____ No (go to 4)

3b. If yes, how would they have contributed to your career plans?

____ Providing credits to an existing, unfinished graduate or doctoral program.
____ Master's level ____ Ph.D. level

____ Banking credits in anticipation of graduate school.

____ As postgraduate credits

____ Other (please explain):

3c-e. Please choose one of the following responses for each of the next three questions.

(a) This factor would make no difference in your decision to enroll at the graduate level.
(b) This factor would cause some concern but you would still enroll at the graduate level.
(c) This factor would put your decision to enroll for graduate credit in jeopardy.
(d) You would not enroll for graduate credit as a result of this factor.

3c. ____ How would your decision to take Westerns training programs, for graduate credit, be altered by having to pay full price for credits--no subsidy or agency assistance. (currently $35/credit)

3d. ____ How would your decision to take Westerns training programs, for graduate credit, be altered by out-of-class work to meet graduate level standards.

3e. ____ How would your decision to take Westerns training programs, for graduate credit, be altered by uncertainties concerning the transferability of those credits.

4. What role does a graduate degree play in your career advancement?

____ Your career advancement does not rely on a graduate education.

____ You need these credits to finish a currently incomplete graduate degree.

____ A graduate degree will cut several years of job position experience from your advancement requirements.

____ You feel that this level of education is necessary to become as professional as you want or need to be in social work.

5a. Do you have plans to return to school for further professional coursework?

____ Yes (go to 5b and 5c)

____ No (go to 6)

5b. What degree will you pursue?

____ A Doctoral degree or Ph.D. completion.

____ A Masters degree or Masters completion.

____ A BA degree or BA completion.

____ Continuing Education coursework at a nearby university or community college.

____ Coursework at a private school, vocational school, or professional development program.

5c. What program and institution do you anticipate doing this work in?

_____ (program)
MSW, MPA, MBA, MHS, MA Counseling, MA Psych,
other _____.

at _____ (school)

6a. Do your personal career goals involve a continuing career in social work at DSHS?

____ Yes (go to 7) ____ No (go to 6b)

6b. If not, do they:

____ Involve moving to a non-social work type of position within DSHS?

____ Involve continuing a social work (or social service delivery) career outside of DSHS?

____ Involve leaving the field of social work entirely? (for what profession/field_____?)

7. **Training has potential to benefit you as a professional, the Agency and division, and the client and community at large.**

From your experience of the WWU Trainings, please answer the next six questions using the following scale of one to seven:

1=no practical contribution
4=moderately practical contribution
7=very strong contribution

7a. Contribution to you as a professional:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
No practical contribution			Moderate contribution			Very strong contribution

7b. Contribution to EMFS / DSHS:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
No practical contribution			Moderate contribution			Very strong contribution

7c. Contribution to the Client / Community :

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
No practical contribution			Moderate contribution			Very strong contribution

8. **In your opinion, how would these ratings change if WWU trainings were available for graduate credit?**

____ They wouldn't change (go to 9)

____ They would change approximately as follows (go to 8a-c):

8a. Contribution to you as a professional:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
No practical contribution			Moderate contribution			Very strong contribution

8b. Contribution to EMFS / DSHS:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
No practical contribution			Moderate contribution			Very strong contribution

8c. Contribution to the Client / Community :

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
No practical contribution			Moderate contribution			Very strong contribution

9. **To what extent to you think your professional development needs are typical of other social workers in this division, with regard to educational and career development needs?** Again, please answer on a scale of one to seven.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not typical at all			Moderately typical			Very typical

Demographic

Thank you! This information is very helpful.

The last few questions I have for you are strictly demographic. Remember that **only your responses are recorded and that you are not identified.** Nevertheless, if any of the questions make you uncomfortable, please feel free to decline to answer them.

This information gives shape to the group of social workers that this study is serves.

* * * * *

10. **Job Classification:** Social Worker 1 2 3 4

11. **Region:** 1 2 3 4 5 6

12. **Which of the following best characterizes the demographic setting that you work in?**

    ____ Rural (e.g., farming, orchards, ranching, logging, fishing and related small towns, e.g. -- Republic, Forks, Stevenson),

    ____ Semi-rural (major towns and county seats in rural counties, e.g. -- Sunnyside, Chehalis),

    ____ Suburban (bedroom communities, freeway access hubs, buffer communities to cities, e.g. -- Wenatchee, Everett, Ellensburg),

    ____ Industrial (including major resource shipping and labor density, e.g. -- Longview/Kelso, Aberdeen, Yakima),

    ____ Urban (high density, city, e.g. -- greater Seattle, Spokane, Tacoma, Vancouver).

13. **What are the primary and secondary racial groups that comprise your client load?** (Circle primary, underline secondary)

    Caucasian Hispanic Native American Black

    Asian Pacific Islander Other _____

14. **If you have attended the Institute, which cycle did you attend?**

5 (Began Oct 14 - 18, 1991)
6 (Began Oct 28 - Nov 1, 1991)
7 (Began Jan 27 - 31, 1992)
8 (Began Feb 10 - 14, 1992)

15. **Your Gender:** _____ Female _____ Male

16. **Your Race** (circle one):

Caucasian Hispanic Native American Black

Asian Pacific Islander Other _____

17. **Your Age:**

21-30 _____

31-40 _____

41-50 _____

51-60 _____

61+_____

18. **How many years have you been an EMFS social worker?**

Up to 1 year ____

1 - 3 years ____

3 - 5 years ____

5 - 10 years ____

More than 10 years (how many?) ____

19. **How many years total have you been employed with DSHS or in other state positions?**

Up to 1 year ____

1 - 3 years ____

3 - 5 years ____

5 - 10 years ____

More than 10 years (how many?) ____

20. **How many years have you spent in related social services positions?**

Up to 1 year ____

1 - 3 years ____

3 - 5 years ____

5 - 10 years ____

More than 10 years (how many?) ____

21. **Prior to taking The Institute training, how long has it been since your last related professional coursework?**

____ less than one year

____ 1 - 3 years

____ 3 - 7 years

____ more than 7 years

22. **What is your current educational level?**

____ Quarters/college

____ BA in _____

____ BA+____ quarters

____ Masters in _____

____ Masters+ _____ quarters in _____

APPENDIX B: NARRATIVE RESPONSE CATALOG

While this survey did not solicit narrative commentary, spontaneous pertinent comments were recorded as offered. Cataloged commentary focusses not only on credit graduate credit issues, but includes training comments relevant to professional development. Comments are cataloged by the survey question to which they refer.

1. *Have you attended any WWU training sessions in your position as an EMFS Social Worker?*

   Not a permanent employee - hard to get approval to take trainings.

   Too far away for her to attend.

1a. *Prior to attending the institute, or other WWU trainings, were you made aware that they were available for undergraduate college credit?*

   Need Institute in Eastern Washington.

   Need Institute in Eastern Washington. Limited administrative support for time and travel for Institute and trainings.

   Need Institute in Eastern Washington.

1b. *If yes, did you enroll for college credit?*

   Would have preferred graduate credit.

3a. *If the Institute, or other WWU trainings, were made available for graduate credit, would you register to take them at that level?*

Absolutely! Very very interested.

Would have been a big incentive.

She will retire soon, but feels education is necessary.

Depends on where they were and if the training also applied to her work.

3b. *How would they have contributed to your career plans?*

Contributed to professional development - loves training.

Professional enhancement.

Wants local degree.

4. *What role does a graduate degree play in your career advancement?*

Feels it would be helpful to herself - not necessary, but would help her.

Already have a graduate degree but would like to have an additional graduate degree -- MSW with maximum use of applied credit and experience from current MA degree.

Thinks it's very important to get education and graduate education would be good for the department.

5a. *Do you have plans to return to school for further professional coursework?*

More concerned with how it would relate to personnel issues.

Wants to but too many barriers.

Wants to get credit now for what he is taking and will decide later to go on. Wants employer to know.

Wants to get certification for sign language interpreting and go on for Bachelor's degree.

Would attend WWU if they would streamline the requirements for MSW in shorter time - 6-9 months.

University of Washington and Pacific Lutheran University are extremely expensive. They would take it at WWU if it offered the degrees. Wants to influence policies in field, and funding.

Has real concerns about being able to finish her education.

Only if offered conveniently.

She is very interested in WWU offering this MA counseling. Would definitely take it.

Wants a MSW wherever they can get to; would like to go to WWU. Would like correspondence.

More are trying to achieve a better degree. The employees he knows all wish to obtain further education.

7. *[Rating training on its' professional contribution, as it is currently presented, without a graduate credit option.]*

You can't do your job without training! Without training you'll surely fail. We need much more of it. There are always too many people who can't go or need to go. Make classes bigger or offer them more often.

Trainings of WWU are very well done and networking that results is wonderful.

Feels it's repetitive and could use refresher stuff.

8. *[Rating training on its' professional contribution, potentially enhanced by a graduate credit option.]*

Would enhance the retention of training that's already very good.

Very impressed with WWU.

Availability of graduate credit would increase options for everyone. Facilitate increased training for all staff.

Feels very very strongly about value of education. When you have to work at it you will get a lot more out of it.

Need solid transferrable credits - change criteria.

14. *If you have attended the Institute, which cycle did you attend?*

Tried to sign up for it but it was booked, so plans to take it when it is offered again.

She expressed great concern over the full waiting lists. People that were #1 on the list for Cycle 7 are having to wait until Cycle 10. She needs it to go on to Social Worker 4. Many others expressed same concern.

Attended the Institute training from WWU and totally enjoyed it. Thinks cycles need more meat to them - cover more prevalent needs.

22. *What is your current educational level?*

Would like to receive credit for trainings he is taking and anticipates graduate level training at later time. Feels it is important to his employer that an interest in education is shown, but would like to achieve more than a mark by his name that he has attended.

Retiring in two years. Doesn't want to continue education at this point.

Will retire in five or six years so doesn't plan to continue education.

Would like to continue graduate education if it could be fit into his schedule. Also plans on taking the Institute Cycles.

Many hours of post-graduate credits in Counseling but not transferrable.

Educated in her native country - now has Psychology certificate from University of Washington. Wants very much to get a Master's degree. Through University of Washington wrote a linguistic book.

Really likes the Institute training - feels for the new social workers and new programs. It is a tremendous help in their education for the department. She has been involved since the beginning and the planning stages of it, so she sees it as a benefit to everyone concerned. She does not plan to go for her Master's degree, as she learns from her fellow workers so much.

She wanted to know if there is a school besides University of Washington to get a Masters. Very hopeful that WWU would decide to develop an MA program.

Feels education very essential, especially MA. Feels the reason he has not moved up in position is because of lack of degree. Would like to take any classes he can to further his knowledge.

Has had reality therapy. Wished he could have gotten college credit. Would definitely enroll if WWU offers graduate level training in the Seattle area.

Applied at WWU for an evening MSW program but only six people were accepted so she couldn't attend it (400 people applied). She strongly hoped this will be offered because there is a great need and she thinks WWU trainings are wonderful.

Has some quarters toward graduate credit. Would like to get a second Master's degree and had heard of this survey and hopes it won't take two years to happen.

Feels she is too old to continue for a Master's degree, but would take classes to bank credits and to further her education.

Her caseload is so large at this time, she doesn't know if she could spare any time for furthering her education, although she would like to. The Institution would have to be close to her to be able to attend, and she would also need agency subsidy.

Has a Masters in Social Services, one year in law school, and one year graduate level management training.

Will retire soon, although she did say she would go for MA if the opportunity arose.

Will retire soon, but feels that Social Services can gain a much greater capability to help people with more knowledge.

Would like to get a PhD in Psychology but is taking a break at this time due to University of Washington's high costs.

She has a lot of Psychology background. Feels that until DSHS pays more and recognizes a Masters degree, that as far as jobs go, it matters less to get the MA. She did think that furthering education would help workers to aid clients more, but the MA doesn't change the pay and help is needed in paying for classes.

She will retire in 8 years and is happy to stay where she is now.

Has a Psychology degree from WWU 1989 with a minor in Sociology. Wants to return to corrections, probation and parole. Previously worked with juveniles counseling. Wants to return for Masters but is unsure when at this time.

Currently enrolled in Human Services Program in Seattle via WWU.

Criminal Justice experience, and Drug and Alcohol Certification. He doesn't believe that he needs anymore graduate credits.

Wants very much to take the test for his BA and continue on for his Masters.

No graduate level was available to him at time he needed to go - too expensive, need package deal to take classes at night, also, perhaps a certificate program.

Other/General Responses.

Should have been accumulating all possible credits over past 12 years. Been trying to get into Bi-Polar for two years!

Will retire soon - would like to get a MA. Attended in 1978. Doesn't know if credits will transfer.

Very excited at this possibility. She has been talking with other social workers about this in her office and they all agree that offering the MA would be a great opportunity for them. Also hope that the agency would assist them in continuing their education.

Look at cost - many will never go for graduate school because of the tremendous burden of the cost.

Has no definite plans to return to school but would like to get a doctorate. Problem is no school offers it in Eastern Washington.

Many would enroll if a non-residential program was offered. Evaluate work experience and contract what ever you need for MA. Wants credit for work experience and training she's had through the state. Is looking for college with non-resident program. Can find nothing in Washington. Is now looking out of state.

No classes close to her - travel time. Employment time loss is too big of a hardship. Many of her co-workers and herself feel the Grief and Loss, Mental Impairment, and Dual Diagnosis workshops are excellent, like most specialty trainings.

Need more trainings on the other (east) side of the mountains.

Eastern Washington very seriously needs local trainers. There would be a much better response to training as trainings become more logistically accessible.

Trainings are not consistent with the needs of experienced workers. They are frankly very boring for experienced social workers. Younger workers are very charged by

them. Very appropriate at that level. Travel arrangements are a barrier for everybody. Not reimbursed at Office of Financial Management rate. Bad travel arrangements! Trainers were wonderful. . . very good!

Does not want another MA unless it's applicable to what she is doing and for the education. Does not want to be in social work. Has previously worked with Children & Family Services in the military.

She wants to finish her MA degree, needs convenient locale for continuing. Also has two small children so time element is important.

She wants to return to education field and teaching. There is no place in this field she wants to advance to. Feels more help and change can be done at education level than in social work.

Doesn't feel MA would make a difference in career advancement. Has come from nine years in CPS to First Steps.

Would like to go to school, get BA and go on for MA. Central is the closest college and there are no night classes or classes in human services or social services.

He is 1 of 45 incapacity specialists in the state. Feels he's in a dead-end job -- everything is dumped on them. Their region and Olympia does nothing where they are concerned. Will retire in 7 years. He feels no need to go on in education. Very disgruntled worker. Cannot go past Social Worker 2 and there is nothing to strive for - he's as far as he can get.

Wants to get her MA in an area near her. She hopes Central has extension program for MA but would attend whichever is closer to her. She is on a waiting list for Institute for Social Welfare in 1993.

Received Bachelor's at WWU. No definite plans to go on for MA, but would go for MSW if he does.

She entered into DSHS in the New Careers Program 23 1/2 years ago to prove someone without an education could do the work. She's proved that she could. She will retire soon but said she would certainly go for the Masters degree if she was just starting.

He really wants to get his BA. He is a very motivated person and concerned about his education. Has a family and inquired about Independent Study Programs. He has looked into an Oregon college for a BA but it's so far away. He is anxious to hear the results of this survey.

Feels he's as high in position as he can get and is happy where he is.

Would like to obtain second masters to upgrade his education. Feels it is necessary to serve the community needs.

Single parent. Has barriers at this time to continue in school but wants to. She is bi-lingual and feels she does the same work as co-workers with a MA degree, but at less pay. Does a lot of leg work and feels the crunch of not having a degree in the field.

Felt the classes were geared to new people entering DSHS and not to ones who have training and background in courses offered. Feels that University of Washington has a more professional attitude and has better usable substance in classes. Masters level need more challenging classes at WWU.

Really enjoyed the Thriving and Surviving training. She has been with DSHS and CPS. She has left and intends to go back to teaching in school because of the "state" of the process and lack of ability to help kids and families. She has highest regard for WWU trainings.

Unhappy with WWU training. Would not attend unless curriculum changed for classes. Social work will not be part of her later future plans.

Felt Institute cycles were excellent. Feels she integrates all she learns into her job and clients whenever she can. Very enthused and energetic person about her future and her education. Feels motivated people, even if uneducated, can get the job done extremely well and are willing to work their way up, whereas, some well-educated people seem to think the particular degree itself does the job.

He suggested we send results of this survey to American Federation of State Community and Municipal Employees - a Union paper. He feels it would reach everyone that way.